Microlog Microfiche Collection
Resolution Chart

Copyright

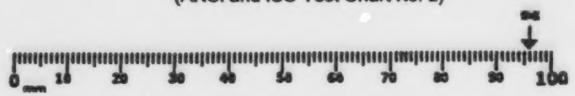
Copyright for the ***contents*** of this microfiche is held by the publisher of the original document. Please contact the original publisher for guidance in all copyright matters. Copyright in this ***microfiche edition*** is held by Micromedia Limited.

Quality of the Microfiche Reproduction

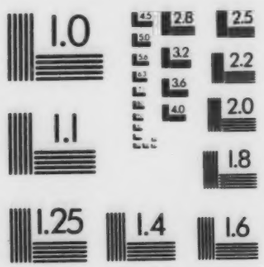
Micromedia Limited maintains the highest standards for micrographic reproduction. Attempts are made to obtain the best quality print version to microfilm. However, there are some printing styles, colours and graphic layout styles (including maps, graphs and tables) which do not reproduce well. Because of the value of the original document, Micromedia has filmed it recognizing that it may not be as easy to read as the original document.

Some pages have been filmed twice to improve the clarity of the reproduction. Consult both reproductions to ensure that all of the original text is read.

Microcopy Resolution Test Chart
National Bureau of Standards
Standard Reference Material 1010a
(ANSI and ISO Test Chart No. 2)



PM-1 3½"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT



MS109

24x

micromedia
a division of IHS Canada

20 Victoria Street, Toronto, ON M5C 2N8
Tel.: (416) 362-5211
Toll free: 1-800-387-2689
Fax: (416) 362-6161

Collection MICROLOG sur Micromédia
Tableau de résolution

Droits d'auteurs

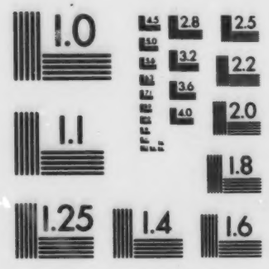
Les droits d'auteurs du conenu de cette microfiche sont détenus par l'éditeur du document original. Veuillez communiquer avec celui-ci pour obtenir des renseignements sur tout ce qui touche les droits d'auteurs. Les droits d'auteurs de cette édition sur microfiche sont détenus par Micromédia Limitée.

Qualité de reproduction sur microfiche

Micromédia Limitée maintient les normes de reproduction micrographique les plus élevées. Elle fait tout son possible pour obtenir la version sur papier à reproduire sur microfiche de la meilleure qualité possible. Cependant, certains styles d'imprimerie, de couleurs et de style de mise en page graphique (incluant des cartes, des grahiques et des tableaux) se reproduisent mal. En raison de la valeur du document original, Micromédia l'a reproduit tout en reconnaissant qu'il ne sera peut-être pas aussi lisable que le document original.

Tableau de résolution micrographique
National Bureau of Standards
Standard Reference Material 1010a
(ANSI and ISO Test Chart No. 2)

PM-1 3½"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT



MS109

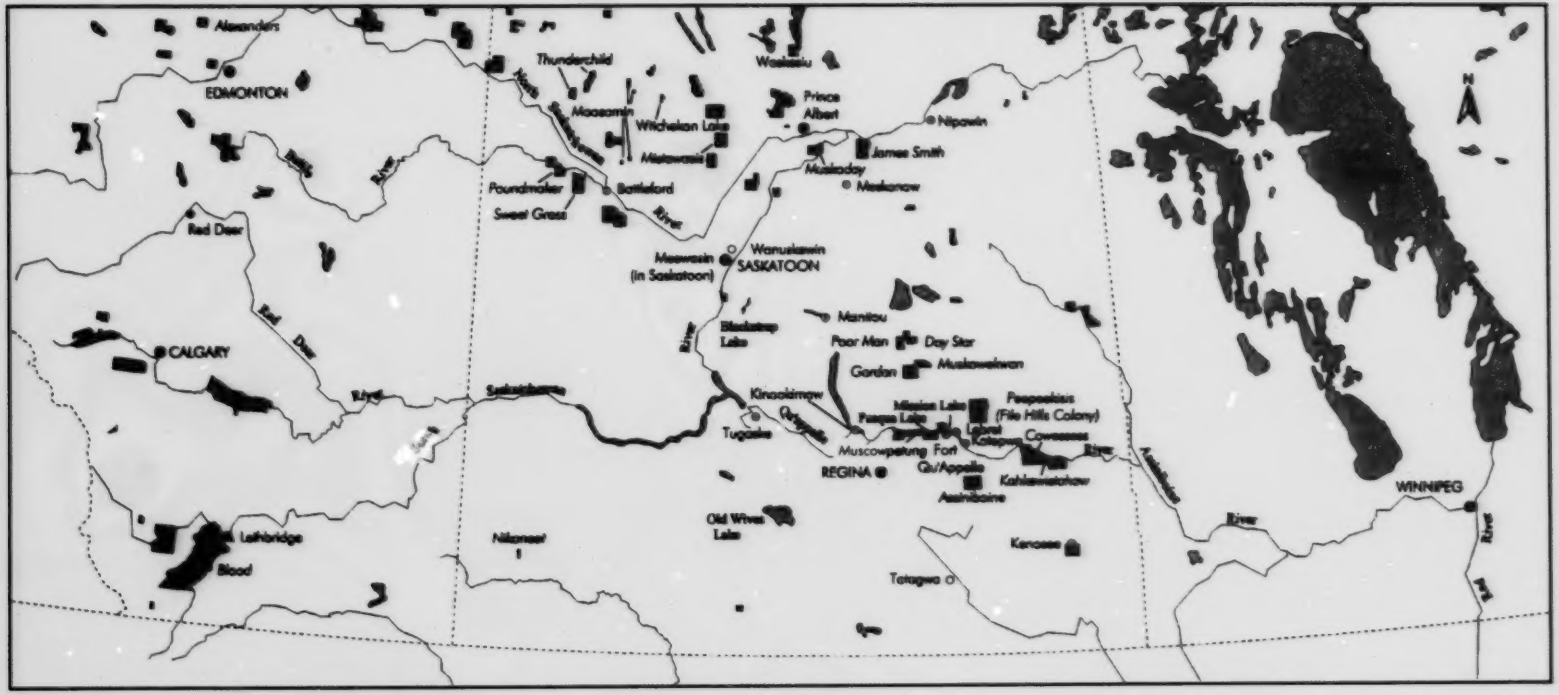
24x

micromedia
a division of IHS Canada

20 Victoria Street, Toronto, ON M5C 2N8
Tel.: (416) 362-5211
Toll free: 1-800-387-2689
Fax: (416) 362-6161

Essays on Aboriginal Peoples & the Prairie

edited by Patrick Douaud & Bruce Dawson


Alexanders
EDMONTON
Thunderchild
Waskasoo
Prince Albert
Nipawin
Witchekan Lake
Meadowvale
James Smith
Muskoday
Meskanaw
Poundmaker
Battleford
Sweet Grass
Red Deer
Red Deer River
Mosquito Grizzly Bear's Head
Beaver River
Moosewin (in Saskatoon)
Waniuskewin
SASKATOON
Manitou
Blackstrap Lake
Poor Man
Day Star
CALGARY
Gordon
Muskowekwan
Saskatchewan River
Kinistaimow
Mission Lake
Peepeekisis (File Hills Colony)
Peepeekisis Lake
Tuquisse
Muscowpetung
Fort Qu'Appelle
Cowessess
REGINA
Kahkewistahaw
Assiniboine River
Assiniboine
WINNIPEG
Lethbridge
Old Wives Lake
Nilamon
Blood
Kenosee
Tetagwa
Red River

Plain Speaking

Plain Speaking

Essays on Aboriginal Peoples and the Prairie

edited by
Patrick C. Douaud
Bruce W. Dawson

Canadian Plains Research Center
University of Regina
2002

Copyright © 2002 Canadian Plains Research Center

Copyright Notice
All rights reserved. No part of this work covered by the copyrights hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means – graphic, electronic, or mechanical – without the prior written permission of the publisher. Any request for photocopying, recording, taping or placement in information storage and retrieval systems of any sort shall be directed in writing to the Canadian Reprography Collective.

Canadian Plains Research Center
University of Regina
Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 0A2
Canada
Tel: (306) 585-4758
Fax: (306) 585-4699
e-mail: canadian.plains@uregina.ca
http://www.cprc.ca

National Library of Canada Cataloguing in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

Plain speaking

Proceedings of a conference held in Regina, Sask., Mar. 17-18, 2001.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISNB 0-88977-139-1

1. Native peoples—Prairie Provinces—Congresses.* I. Douaud, Patrick C., 1949- II. Dawson, Bruce W. (Bruce William), 1971- III. University of Regina. Canadian Plains Research Center.

E78.P7P52 2002 971.2'00497 C2002-910171-9

Cover Design: Donna Achtzehner, Canadian Plains Research Center

Cover Illustration: "A Starry Cree Floral Night" (2001), acrylic/fabric on canvas (2' x 3')," by Sheila Orr

Printed and bound in Canada by Houghton Boston, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Printed on acid-free paper

Contents

Introduction
Patrick C. Douaud and *Bruce W. Dawson* vii

Recovering the Heritage of Treaty Numer Four
Blair Stonechild 1

"Better Than a Few Squirrels": The Greater Production Campaign on the First Nations Reserves of the Canadian Prairies
Bruce Dawson 11

nêhiyâwiwin and Modernity
Neal McLeod 23

As *Plain(s)* as the Ear can Hear
Jean Okimâsis 35

Earth, Land and Healing
Patrick C. Douaud 55

Aboriginal Women's Health and Healing on the Plains
Linda Otway 61

Drawn to the Land: An Urban Métis Woman Makes Her Connection
Bev Cardinal 69

Poetry and the Prairie: Writing, *Aboriginality*, and the Land
Randy Lundy 77

Theatre and the Pictograph
Floyd Favel Star 85

A Glimpse into the Past Through the Eye of Everett Baker (1893–1981)
Finn Andersen 89

An Interview with Sheila Orr, Artist
Heather Hodgson 93

Elders' Roundtable 101
Map ..... Inside Front Cover

Introduction

Aboriginal People have had a long and unique connection with the prairies. Since time immemorial, the First Nations and Métis peoples have forged social, economic, historical and artistic relationships with the prairie ecosystem. These relationships, though often influenced by tradition, are not strictly bound by the past: rather, contemporary encounters and interpretations of these relationships between people and prairie are important aspects of living, contemporary cultures.

A desire to hear and share these contemporary stories, as well as new interpretations of past encounters, prompted the papers contained in this collection of essays. The collection is based in part on the proceedings of a two-day conference entitled "Plain As the Eye Can See: Aboriginal Peoples and the Prairies," held at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum and the University of Regina on March 17 and 18, 2001. The conference was staged as a public forum, set up to encourage academic researchers and local experts to come together to converse on the various types and levels of connections between First Nations and Métis peoples and the Canadian Plains. A key aspect of the conference was to share information in a holistic manner by utilizing a variety of presentation formats, including lecture-style talks, drama, comedy, demonstrations, and an Elders roundtable.

A number of people and organizations deserve recognition for their roles in organizing and staging the conference. These include the members of the organizing committee, which was comprised of: Bruce Dawson, of Prairie Historical Insight; Patrick Douaud, Heather Hodgson and Neal McLeod, of the University of Regina; Margaret Hanna, of the Royal Saskatchewan Museum; and Cindy Bashford, of the Royal Saskatchewan Museum Associates. We wish to express our gratitude to our key sponsor, the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation, without whose support this event could not have taken place. We also wish to thank: the Royal Saskatchewan Museum; the Royal Saskatchewan Museum Associates; the Canadian Plains Research Centre; Prairie Historical Insight; the Faculty of Education and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College at the University of Regina; Sâkêwêwak; the Public Involvement and Aboriginal Affairs Branch of Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management; and the merry and talented troupe of the Crowhop Café. All of these contributed towards making the event a success. Thanks are also due to three individuals from the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College: Rob Nestor, who facilitated the videotaping of the Elders roundtable, as well as Tina Fontaine and Leona Star, who transcribed the audio recording.

The present book reflects the intent of the conference organizers to explore the diversity of past and present connections between Aboriginal Peoples and the prairies. The essays presented here could roughly be grouped into historic, social, political and artistic themes, but generally present a more holistic approach

towards their subjects. In keeping with the spirit of the conference, these essays are provided in a variety of forms: some have been left in the first person and printed as they were orally presented; others appear in a traditional academic style; one is photo essay; another consists of an interview transcription; and the last one is a slightly edited transcription of the taped Elders roundtable.

The first essay, "Recovering the Heritage of Treaty Number Four," by Blair Stonechild, explores the period that followed the signing of the Treaty in 1874. Although the Aboriginal population was reassured that this agreement would not have detrimental effects on their lives, government policies changed sharply after the North West Rebellion of 1885: the people were confined to reserves, their children committed to residential schools, and many traditional ceremonies were banned. As a consequence, vast amounts of sacred objects ended up in museums and private collections. The Keeping House and Archives of the recently opened Treaty Four Governance Centre have it as their main objective to redress this situation and recover the lost heritage of 35 First Nations in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

In the next essay, "Better Than a Few Squirrels," Bruce Dawson examines the Greater Production Campaign that was launched on the Canadian Prairies in 1918. Promoted as being of great benefit to the reserve residents, the Campaign featured three distinct operating components: a program to increase agricultural production on the reserves; a government farm program; and leasing of reserve land to non-Aboriginal farmers and ranchers. But the Commissioner for the Campaign utilized his considerable powers to achieve personal renown and profits for the department operations, at the expense of the reserve residents upon whose land these farms and grazing preserves were located. This motivated several reserves to challenge the Campaign and ultimately the Department of Indian Affairs.

Basing his reflections on the premise that the land gives power to Indigenous reality, Neal McLeod then explores the nature of Cree narrative tradition and Western post-modernism and argues for a bridging of these two seemingly antithetical interpretations of the world. Next Jean Okimâsis, in "As Plain(s) as the Ear can Hear," demonstrates how Saskatchewan's Aboriginal history is reflected in place names. She first outlines the sound system of Cree as well as the language's dialectal variations, and then selects a number of modern place names in order to show their Aboriginal origins and the manner in which Cree sounds and prosody have been distorted in the process of Anglicization. Following this, Patrick Douaud writes of "Earth, Land, and Healing," and compares the nature and importance of these three concepts in Aboriginal, Oriental and Western spirituality, in an effort to outline the relevance of chthonic and telluric awareness in contemporary concepts of balance and well-being.

Linda Otway then presents an overview of "Aboriginal Women's Health and Healing on the Plains." She first examines the historical underpinnings of Aboriginal women's current plight in terms of health and social welfare, invoking in turn the process of colonization, the loss of time-honed traditions, and the powerful male bias of the Indian Act; after this she suggests some strategies based on community involvement and cultural renewal. The latter theme is taken up from the Métis point of view by Bev Cardinal, who in "Drawn to the Land: An Urban Métis Woman Makes her Connection" writes of her personal quest for wellness and grounding, which has come to fruition in a spiritual connection to

the land and in the conviction that "the only people who truly own the land are the generations yet unborn."

We next enter the domain of art with an essay by Randy Lundy on "Poetry and the Prairie: Writing, Aboriginality, and the Land," where he explores the conflicts facing a writer expected to behave "aboriginally" and their possible resolution in a feeling of being at home in the prairie landscape. Floyd Favel Star follows with a piece on "Theatre and the Pictograph," in which he muses over the relationship between these two modes of expression, both being filtrations of real-life images into symbolic forms and composition. And finally Finn Andersen, in "A Glimpse into the Past Through the Eye of Everett Baker (1893–1981)," introduces us to a little-known American-born Canadian who devoted considerable time and effort to preserving in vivid colour photographs everyday scenes from life in Saskatchewan. From Everett Baker's thousands of slides, Andersen has selected twenty-four Aboriginal scenes ranging in time from 1941 to 1965 (Plates 1 through 24).

The interview which follows concerns an artist too: Heather Hodgson asks Sheila Orr to outline her career and to explain where she finds her inspiration and how she selects her mediums of expression. Eight of Sheila Orr's works are reproduced here (Plates 25 through 32). And finally we offer the transcription of a taped roundtable which focused on the general theme of this book, "Aboriginal People and the Prairie." This round-table involved four Elders: Willie Hodgson, Irene Jacques, Beatrice Lavallée and Marie-Louise Rockthunder; it was chaired by Maria Campbell.

It is our hope that this collection will help the reader identify with past and present Aboriginal connections to the prairie. Several thousand years of pre-contact experience have produced a consciousness and a resilience that can hardly be matched by less than two hundred years of European settlement. As the percentage of Aboriginal peoples in contemporary prairie society is constantly growing, and the general population is increasingly inclined to ask itself questions pertaining to meaning and identity, we need more than ever to share with others and learn from their experiences. This book is an attempt to express Aboriginal ties to the land, be they rooted in the spirit, the intellect, the imagination, or simply the day-to-day lifestyle.

Patrick C. Douaud
Bruce W. Dawson

* In an effort to aid readers in locating places referred to in the text, a detailed map has been included on the inside front cover.

102-04248/

Recovering the Heritage of Treaty Number Four

Blair Stonechild

Losing a Heritage

Recently a "North American Indian Pictographic Treaty Record" dating from between 1873 and 1887 was auctioned for $87,000 to an anonymous Canadian collector. It was reputedly given to a gentleman adventurer named W. Henry Barneby in 1883, and quietly remained in that family's possession until its sudden auctioning. It appears that Barneby was Lord of the manor at an English village called Bredenbury, east of Leominster in Herefordshire. He visited Canada in 1881 and returned again in 1883 to visit friends in Manitoba. In July 1883 he met Nicholas Davin Flood, editor of the Regina *Leader*. He travelled the CPR as far west as it had then been built: Medicine Hat. Upon his return to England, he wrote notes of his tour in the article "Life and Labour in the Far West" (1884).[1] This would be the second of three such tours.[2]

In 1883 Barneby described arriving at a "Cree camp" of about 100 "wigwams" near Fort Qu'Appelle, where several chiefs had congregated and a Sundance ceremony had just been held. Accompanied by a Metis interpreter, the tour party of 20 was introduced by Chief Pasqua to other chiefs reported as "Cote, Keechehona, Muscowpetung, Pepekens, Okanes and Kawakatoos." At the meeting, he stated, there were many orations and dances.

Barneby then says that "A few days later I was given a paper by this chief [Pasquah], showing everything he has received from the Government; it is a great curiosity." At that time "Pasquah made us a speech, remarkable for its apparent fluency," which was part of "a great deal" of speech-making.[3]

In his parting speech on behalf of the tour group, Colonel Williams acknowledged that the Indians were hungry. The tour group had already given tea and tobacco as gifts, and declared that flour and bacon would be later sent to the Indians. Barneby noted that "the Indians expected a handsome present," and remarked on their good fortune as "these gatherings only take place occasionally."

Further analyzing this 1883 event, it is clear Barneby's group had stumbled upon the principal annual gathering of the Saulteaux and Plains Cree of the

---

Blair Stonechild, a Muscowpetung First Nation Plains Cree, is Professor of Indian Studies at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, Treaty 4 archival specialist, and co-author of *Loyal Till Death*.

Courtesy Treaty Four Keeping House and Archives
Chief Pasqua (1875)

Treaty Four area. At the Sundance which took place around early June, the chiefs undoubtedly discussed their dire conditions in anticipation of the treaty payment which would take place early in the fall at Fort Qu'Appelle. This was indeed a time of crisis for the Plains Indians – the buffalo had disappeared, and agriculture on the reserves was experimental and tenuous. Big Bear and Poundmaker were beginning to broadly organize in the Treaty Six area in order to redress treaty issues with government.

Chief Pasqua was one of the more prominent and better informed chiefs at the Treaty Four negotiations. He had had experience with agriculture and sedentary living prior to treaty, and was among the first to take a reserve in 1876. He was well suited to assume the task of creating an Indian record of Treaty Four, and may actually have created the document not too long before Barneby's arrival. Was not the appearance of a large and apparently important party coinciding with their major summer gathering an auspicious time for Pasqua to bring such a document to official attention?

Barneby's assertion that the parchment was some type of gift is difficult to fathom. Had Barneby done anything special to merit such a present? Why would Pasqua want to flippantly give away such a meticulously created description of the treaty which has been referred to as an "Indian Magna Carta"?

Barneby's own recollections reveal a man who paid scant attention to what the Indians had to say, but was quick to describe the savagery of his guests. Of his hosts he wrote: "we devoutly hoped that we might not be called upon to taste the great Indian delicacy of dog-stew which was simmering in the cauldron – and that was the nastiest looking thing in the camp, which is saying a good deal."

This was however not inconsistent with the prevailing view of Indians at the time – that they were savages devoid of higher reasoning or morals. It is only within this context that one can understand how Barneby could believe that such

Courtesy GIS Information Services, Canadian Plains Research Center
The "numbered" treaties of Canada

an item had been given to him for no particular reason other than whim. This case is only one example of the challenges faced in recovering the lost heritage of Treaty Four.

Treaty Promises of First Nation Survival

When First Nations embarked on the process of negotiating treaties with the British Crown in the Canadian North West in the 1870s, that they believed they would maintain their traditions and sacred beliefs was an unspoken assumption.[4]

First Nations emphasis centered on seeking guarantees of assistance for future survival; hence, elements were added to the numbered Treaties that had not existed in prior agreements. These new elements included measures directed at agricultural assistance, and for the establishment of schools and provision of teachers on reserves.[5]

Before Indians would acquiesce to treaties, however, they sought reassurances that the treaties would not be detrimental to themselves or their children. Kamooses in Treaty Four, for example, asked: "Is it true that my child will not be troubled for what you are bringing him?" Commissioner Morris repeatedly stated that what was being planned was for the welfare of future generations: "The Queen thinks of the children yet unborn."[6] Pious promises were made by Morris that: "if she [the Queen] gives you reserves they will be yours and she will let no

one take them from you... ."[7] From the First Nations' perspective, it was expected that they would continue to be free to practice their culture, spiritual beliefs, and ceremonies.

Detribalization and Banning of Ceremonies

It was part of the popular Social Darwinist beliefs of the late nineteenth century that a major reason for the "backwardness" and lack of progressiveness of Indians was their culture, and in particular their traditional beliefs and practices. Hence "detribalization" became part of official policy under the Indian Act, in order to actively discourage and undermine Indian culture and ceremonies in the name of "civilization."

Such a mission would become the reason for creating some of the most blatantly assimilative institutions in human history – the residential schools. Schools such as the ones at Lebret, Regina, Gordon's, Muscowequan, St. Philips, Marieval and Round Lake were often built away from the reserves in order to remove children from their communities, thereby breaking not only the treaty promise "to maintain a school in the reserve" but also the social and cultural fabric of Indian communities.[8] There was also an experiment in social engineering known as the File Hills Colony – a tightly supervised model agricultural community.[9]

One of the first manifestations of the detribalization policy appeared in Section 3 of the April 1884 amendment to the 1880 Indian Act, which punished participation in the Potlatch or "Tamanawas" dance by up to six months imprisonment.[10] In the aftermath of the North West Rebellion of 1885, one of the measures promoted by Prime Minister Macdonald was "that the tribal system should be abolished in so far as is compatible with the treaty i.e. in all cases in which the treaty has been broken by rebel tribes; by doing away with chiefs and councillors ... and careful repression of those that become prominent among them by counselling, medicine dances, and so on."[11]

An 1895 revision was largely targeted against prairie Indian ceremonies involving "self-mutilation": "every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in any celebration or dance of which wounding or mutilation of the dead or living body of any human being or animal forms a part or is a feature, is guilty of an indictable offense."[12]

Such prohibitions were strongly opposed by chiefs, especially those who had signed the original treaty, as Commissioner Morris had clearly given indications that Indian cultural practices would not be interfered with. In the late 1890s, the prominent Cree leader Piapot was imprisoned and later deposed as chief for his refusal to stop the holding of the Sundance.[13]

By 1896, the prognosis for Indian survival was not good. The population of prairie Indians was continuing to fall amid prognostications of their ultimate demise and disappearance altogether.[14] When one considers the sweeping powers of the Indian agent, it becomes clear how Indian reserves were vulnerable targets for a government able to use its coercive powers to "persuade" Indians to give up their ceremonial practices and surrender ceremonial objects often for a few dollars to offset hunger.

Indian Agents thus possessed full powers to enforce their authority under the Indian Act. Section 117 of the 1886 Act stated that "Every Indian Agent shall be ex officio a justice of the peace for the purposes of this Act, and shall have the power and authority of two justices of the peace, with jurisdiction wheresoever

any violation of the provision of this act occurs..."[15] Under the Act, the Agent was in effect prosecutor, judge and jury, and Indians had no recourse to appeal. So wherever persuasion failed, coercion could be brought to bear.

The restrictions on ceremonies did not go unchallenged. For example, in 1903 Etchease, an Indian from the Muscowpetung Reserve, held a Circle Dance after a two-year period in which the agent had successfully prevented them. Indian Agent Graham had Etchease arrested for violating section 114 of the Indian Act, which forbade participation in "any Indian festival, dance or other ceremony of which the giving away or paying or giving back of money, goods or articles of any sort plays a part or is a feature, whether such gift of money, goods or articles takes place before, at or after celebration of the same..." In what was described by the Toronto *Globe* as a "crafty effort" to challenge the law, Etchease had made prior arrangements to retain a lawyer and was subsequently acquitted of the charge. Others were not so lucky: the previous year, there had been twenty-seven convictions of Indians for "engaging in a heathen dance."[16]

In 1906, Dan Kennedy, a well educated member of the Carry the Kettle band, succeeded in petitioning the federal government to hold Indian feasts so long as they did not interfere with agricultural work and did not involve offensive aspects.[17]

In 1911, Chief Louis O'Soup led a delegation of Treaty Four Indians to Ottawa to protest Indian policies and violations of treaty. During the eight-day visit, issues raised with Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, and Frank Pedley, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, included the department's undermining of traditional culture and ceremonies, and the deposing of chiefs; the discussions also focused on problems plaguing Indian schools, land surrenders, and dictatorial practices of the department.[18]

By 1914 there had been a relaxing of the department's policies, so that traditional ceremonies such as the Sun Dance could be held as long as they involved no unacceptable aspects such as "piercing." William Graham, Indian Inspector for southern Saskatchewan, did not agree with this easing, and had the Mounted Police closely monitor ceremonies and crack down on any offenders, such as Indians from other reserves attending without written permission.[19] Arrests such as that of Chief Red Dog of File Hills in 1932 for participating in a Sun Dance continued to have a deterrent effect.[20]

Facilitating Artifact Collection

The unshakable belief that the world was witnessing the disappearance of aboriginal cultures led museums and private collectors on quests to acquire cultural objects that would soon become not only rare but also valuable.

By 1910, the Canadian government hired six fieldworkers under Dr. Edward Sapir of the Anthropological Division of the Department of Mines to collect ethnological materials. One of the concerns raised by the ethnologists was that the restrictive policies of Indian Affairs could hinder ethnological work. Some materials were acquired by the British Museum from the Marquis of Lorne during his 1878–83 tour of western Canada, and were used in developing a "Native Peoples of North America" exhibition.[21]

To its credit, the Department of Indian Affairs attempted to prevent its employees from exploiting the trade in artifacts. Section 42 of the Indian Act of 1906 read: "No official or employee connected with the inside or outside service

of the Department of Indian Affairs, and no missionary in the employ of any religious denomination, or otherwise employed in mission work among Indians, and no school teacher on an Indian reserve, shall, without the special license in writing of the Superintendent General, trade with any Indian, or sell to him directly or indirectly, any goods or supplies, cattle or other animals."

In 1927, section 106 of the Indian Act was amended to prohibit removal of cultural materials from reserves: "no Indian grave-house, carved grave-house, carved grave-pole, totem pole, carved house-post or large rock embellished with paintings or carvings on an Indian reserve shall be removed, taken away, mutilated, disfigured, defaced or destroyed without such written consent."

Collection forays like the Franklin Expedition, financed through Cambridge University in 1929, scoured the prairies to collect Indian cultural heritage objects. The expedition spent $1,083 U.S. on acquiring Canadian Plains Indian items during one month of that summer.[22] Receiving up to $60 for some objects was an enticement that represented the equivalent of a typical year's income for most of these Indians.[23] One member, Donald Cadzow, had been on previous collecting trips in 1925 and 1926 on behalf of the Museum of the American Indian in New York, where detailed records of his activities are kept. The 1929 expedition succeeded in obtaining approximately 700 items, possibly the largest collection in any British centre. Notable items include items once belonging to Chief Red Dog of the File Hills area.[24]

Fred Bradshaw, Director of the then Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, relied on William Graham, Indian Commissioner in the province from 1920 to 1932, to obtain or recommend artifacts for purchase. Much of Graham's material originated from the File Hills reserves. Other major contributors to the Saskatchewan Museum were: the Weekes collection, originating mainly from the Fort Qu'Appelle area between 1920 to 1950; the Stanley collection, originating mainly from the Touchwood Hills area, where Mr. Stanley had been Indian Agent; and the McGrath collection, gathered from the Yorkton area between 1900 and 1920.

The building of the Museum's collection was driven more by individual interest than by overall plan. Its ethnological collection numbers close to 5,000 items, dating as far back as the 1880s, over half of which originate from the Treaty Four area. Sacred items such as pipes, bundles, drums and whistles are included in the Museum's holdings.[25]

Questioning the Demise of Indians

By the late 1930s social attitudes began to change. More and more anthropologists were beginning to question the wisdom of destroying aboriginal culture. First Nations individuals such as Mike Mountain Horse, Joe Dion and Rev. Edward Ahenakew were able to begin to educate the general public about Indian ways and values. Political movements such as the League of Indians of Western Canada were established in 1929, and would be followed by the Saskatchewan Indian Association in 1944 and the Union of Saskatchewan Indians in 1946.[26]

Finally, complaints about unfair restrictions on religious practices were recognized as a violation of human rights by the 1947 Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons, and led to the dropping of the offensive clauses from the 1950 Indian Act.[27]

Recovery of the Treaty Ground Reserve

At the time of Treaty Four negotiations, the chiefs had requested that the site of treaty signing near Fort Qu'Appelle be set aside permanently for the purpose of facilitating on-going treaty transactions. In 1882, a Treaty Ground Reserve was surveyed "at a place or places to be appointed for that purpose [discussing treaty matters]" and encompassed approximately 1,400 acres.[28] Annuity payments were conducted there until 1881, but after that date government policy focussed on compelling Indians to remain on their reserves, and coercion was used to prevent large Indian gatherings at the site. Following the North West Rebellion of 1885, Indian policy forbade Indians to leave their reserves without passes. Pressure from local settlers in the newly expanding settlement of Fort Qu'Appelle was exerted to throw the land open to settlers, leading to abolishment of the Treaty Ground in 1894.

In the 1970s, a Federation of Saskatchewan Indians researcher following up on reports by elders about the existence of the grounds, uncovered a map of the Treaty Ground at the Saskatchewan Archives.[29] This discovery led to further archival research and eventually to the development of a land claim in 1987, supported by the 33 Treaty Four First Nations.[30] In 1992 the claim was accepted for negotiation by the Government of Canada, and a $6 million settlement was signed on September 14, 1995, ending one hundred years of injustice.

On September 15, 2000 the 54,000 square foot Treaty Four Governance Centre was opened, housing several units which include offices and the Treaty Four Keeping House and Archives. It is located at Fort Qu'Appelle, on the very site of the original Treaty Ground which was surveyed prior to the establishment of the town.

The Treaty Four Keeping House and Archives

The Keeping House and Archives "Statement of Purpose" reads:

> The Treaty Four Keeping House exists to promote and preserve the heritage of 35 First Nations in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Government policies designed to "civilize and assimilate" First Nations cultures resulted in wide displacement of cultural heritage objects. Fortunately Canada has recently recognized the value of retaining and enhancing its Aboriginal heritage. In order to promote the continuing growth of First Nations culture and identity, these sacred and historical objects need to be properly preserved and managed. Such items must also be accessible to First Nations Elders and communities. The Keeping House will collect, conserve, catalogue and display objects for educational purposes.

Apart from housing a number of administrative and business offices, the centre will provide a much needed focus of identity for the more than 40,000 Indians of Treaty Four. In March 1999 Blair Stonechild studied the potential objectives, programs, and physical and funding requirements of the Treaty Four Keeping House and Archives; and in February 2000 Lorne Carrier was hired as Curator of the Keeping House.[31]

While the primary function of the Keeping House will be to collect, preserve and store heritage items, there will also be a limited display function and access to collections. Elders will be provided access to ensure proper ceremonial care of sacred objects. The 3,500 square feet of space in the Keeping House will include a climate-controlled "cocoon," storage spaces, archival shelving, offices, and a

Courtesy David McLennan
Treaty Four monument, Fort Qu'Appelle

receiving/workshop area. Approximately 2,000 square feet of space, including the Chiefs' Council Chamber lobby area, will be available for historical and educational displays.

Repatriating Cultural Heritage

Among the Keeping House's objectives is the collection of artifacts directly connected to Treaty Four, such as medals, parchments, flags, pipes and drums. As well, many other items could be relevant, such as agricultural tools given out under terms of the treaty and including hoes, spades, axes, plows, harrows, carpenter's tool chests, handsaws, augers, cross-cut saws, pit saws, files and grindstones. Numerous other items also relevant to the history of Treaty Four people can be housed in the Keeping House, such as sacred objects, war veterans' medals, sports awards, residential school memorabilia, and photos and records of political leaders. While many of these physical objects will be stored in a controlled environment, other types of records such as maps, pay lists, and official correspondence will be housed in a more archival format.

Responses from Canadian public museums with respect to the transfer of sacred objects from Treaty Four have been positive and cooperative. Those institutions have learned to respect the sacredness of this heritage and the importance of returning them to their proper cultural community.[32]

The Glenbow Museum in Calgary possesses approximately 2,000 artifacts from Treaty Four, including items such as a treaty medal, treaty parchment, and a treaty chief's coat. Bill 2 *First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act* was introduced into the Alberta Legislature in March 2000. Discussions about returning sacred objects to First Nations had been going on for several years, and Premier Ralph Klein, who is an honorary member of the Siksika (Blackfoot) Nation, was instrumental in pushing the legislation forward. Among other things, the Bill states that "the Crown desires to harmonize the role museums play in the preservation of human heritage with the aspirations of First Nations to support traditional values in strong, confident First Nations communities."[33] While regulations are still being worked out, particular emphasis is placed on returning objects to support on-going traditional religious practice. The Glenbow collection is in a unique situation in that it is legally owned by the people of Alberta, hence the necessity for enabling legislation. As well, ways in which the regulations will be applied in the case of sacred objects belonging to non-Albertan First Nations have yet to be worked out.[34]

The Manitoba Museum of Man as well as the Canadian Museum of

Civilization, which holds the nation's largest aboriginal ethnographic collection, are two other major Canadian institutions which possess significant amounts of Treaty Four cultural heritage. The National Archives of Canada, mandated to house the original written copies of the treaties, have contributed an exact photographic reproduction for display in the Keeping House.[35]

On-going Challenges

Finding adequate funding not only to construct and maintain a facility, but also to fund acquisitions and build an active program is a tremendous challenge. Unlike federal and provincial museums, there are no statutory funding lines for similar First Nations institutions. The Keeping House will have to find creative methods of fund-raising. The development of the Treaty Four Tourism Authority is one possible answer for generating the necessary resources.

Notes

1. W. Henry Barneby, "Life and Labour in the Far, Far West" *The New Englander* 43, no. 183 (November 1884). Barneby later returned to Canada as a guest of the general manager of the Manitoba & North Western Railway, and this time travelled as far west as Vancouver, and eventually to the Orient. When he returned to England he wrote of his visit in the book *The New Far West and the Old Far East* (1889).
2. W.H. Barneby, *The New Far West and Old Far West: Being Notes of a Tour in North America, Japan, China, etc.* (London: E. Stanford, 1889). The origin of the name of the town of Bredenbury, Saskatchewan is believed to have been associated with Barneby. http://www.virtualsk.com/current_issue/bill_barry_3.html
3. Barneby, "Life and Labour in the Far, Far West," 217–18.
4. John L. Taylor, "Development of an Indian Policy for the Canadian North West 1869–79" (Ph.D. dissertation, Queen's University, 1975), 270–75.
5. Arthur J. Ray, Jim Miller and Frank J. Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of Saskatchewan Treaties* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press: 2000), 79–80.
6. Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories...* (1880; Toronto: Coles, 1979), 96 and 118.
7. Ibid., 104.
8. J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), and J. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999).
9. Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Farmers and Government Policy* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1990), 239–44, and Brian Titley, "W.M. Graham: Indian Agent Extraordinaire" in *Saskatchewan Indian Federated College Journal* 2, no. 1 (1986).
10. Section 3, "An Act to further amend 'The Indian Act, 1880'," *Statutes of Canada*, 1884, chapter 27; see also K. Pettipas, *Severing the Ties that Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994), 93.
11. "Memorandum for the Honourable the Indian Commissioner relative to the future management of Indians" in Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser, *Loyal Till Death: Indians and the North West Rebellion* (Calgary: Fifth House, 1997), 250–51.
12. 1895 amendment to Indian Act, 1886, Section 114, *Revised Statutes of Canada*, chapter 35. Pettipas maintains that part of government bias against "piercing" was based on the misunderstanding that the act was intended to train "warriors" and that its true intent was "self-offering" for spiritual purposes.
13. Pettipas, *Severing the Ties that Bind*, 15, and Abel Watetch, *Payepot and His People* (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1959), 39.
14. Regina *Leader-Post*, March 31, 1979. Also see P. Martin-McGuire, *First Nations Surrenders on the Prairies 1896–1911* (Ottawa: Indian Claims Commission, 1998).
15. *Revised Statutes of Canada* 1886, chapter 43.
16. Pettipas, *Severing the Ties that Bind*, 119–22.

17. Ibid., 133.
18. Carter, *Lost Harvests*, 255–56. There were 9 members in the delegation.
19. Pettipas, *Severing the Ties that Bind*, 150–55 and 179. The shortened version of the Sun Dance became known as the "Rain Dance."
20. Ibid., 176.
21. *National Post*, June 8, 1999, pages 86-87.
22. "Retracing the Franklin Motor Expedition" (lecture by Alison Brown, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, June 11, 1999).
23. Artifacts that became collectors' items are today offered for sale for significant prices, for example, a Plains Cree "medicine robe" dating from the 1870s was recently offered for sale through the Donald Ellis Gallery for $32,000.
24. Alison Brown, "Collecting in Canada: The Franklin Motor Expedition," *Centre for Rupert's Land Studies* 5 (Spring 1999). The family of the Rymill brothers from Australia, who were also on the Franklin Expedition, possesses rare film footage taken in 1929 of Chief Red Dog and Indians.
25. Margaret Hanna, "What Should a Museum Collect?" (Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, 1990). Individuals such as M.C. Harrison and John Hellson made a living by collecting artifacts from First Nations in southern Saskatchewan.
26. Pettipas, *Severing the Ties that Bind*, 196–204.
27. Ibid., 204–10.
28. "Treaty Number Four" in Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians*, 332.
29. Blair Stonechild, "Indian Treaties and Rights Research Project Final Report" (Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, Regina, 1971, unpublished).
30. The First Nations which comprise Treaty Four include: Carry the Kettle, Cote, Cowessess, Day Star, Fishing Lake, Gambler's, Gordon, Kahkewistehaw, Kawacatoose, Keeseekoose, Key, Kinistin, Little Black Bear, Muscowpetung, Muskowequan, Nekaneet, Ocean Man, Ochapowace, Okanese, Pasqua, Peepeekisis, Pheasant Rump, Piapot, Pine Creek, Rolling River, Sakimay, Sapotaweyak, Starblanket, Tootinaowaziibeeng, Waywayseecappo, White Bear, Wuski Sipihk, and Yellowquill. Grizzly Bear's Head and Lean Man are not included as they are amalgamated with a Treaty Six band. Standing Buffalo and Wood Mountain are located within Treaty Four territory, but are not signatories to the treaty.
31. Museums Assistance Program Grant Application, January 19, 1999. Dr. Margaret Hanna of the Royal Saskatchewan Museum assisted in obtaining this training grant.
32. Treaty Four heritage objects can also be found internationally in places such as the Denver Natural History Museum and Buffalo Bill Center in the United States, and Cambridge University in England.
33. Legislative Assemby of Alberta, Fourth Session, 24th Legislature, 2000 Bill 2, "First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act."
34. Indian Claims Commission, "Carry the Kettle First Nation Inquiry: Cypress Hills Claim." The western limits of Treaty Four extend to 110 ½ degrees West Longitude, approximately at the city of Medicine Hat. The 340-square-mile Assiniboine Reserve described by surveyor A.P. Patrick in 1880 would have straddled the contemporary Alberta-Saskatchewan boundary had the federal government not decided to remove First Nations from the Cypress Hills area.
35. In terms of churches, Regina Archbishop Mallon recently facilitated an agreement for the transfer of 21 sacred objects including numerous pipes and a few medicine bags from the Roman Catholic Parish in Lebret.

"Better Than a Few Squirrels": The Greater Production Campaign on the First Nations Reserves of the Canadian Prairies

Bruce Dawson

The manner by which the First Nations Peoples of the prairies were compelled to practice agriculture was unique in the history of western Canada. Unlike the self-determining experience of the non-aboriginal agriculturalists that settled in the west, the First Nations farmers and ranchers had virtually no control over the success, failure or direction of the agricultural pursuits undertaken on their land. With the establishment of the prairie reserves in the 1870s, the government assumed control over all facets of agricultural operations on behalf of the reserve residents. Often the decisions made by these officials were for the benefit of the government rather than of the First Nations farmers and ranchers whom they were supposed to be representing. As a result, a great deal of mistrust and ill will developed between the two sides. The occasional resistance by reserve residents to unjust government decisions met with questions by department officials about the Aboriginal peoples' ability, integrity and interest in agriculture. A significant episode in this strained relationship was the implementation of the Greater Production Campaign in the spring of 1918.

When introduced by Prime Minister Robert Borden in the 1918 throne speech, the Greater Production Campaign (hereafter GPC) was touted at a nationwide plan to increase the production of meats and grains. At the time, World War I was moving into its fourth year and food supplies were badly needed in Europe. The plan was quite extensive: the government desired to increase yields on fields then currently in production as well as bring all unutilized and under-utilized lands in Canada into full production. To reach these goals, cash assistance totalling $280,000 was allocated to the provincial agriculture departments. These funds were to be used to purchase tractors to break new land, procure top quality seed, and hire supervisors to oversee the provincial operations.

Attached to the end of the Campaign outline was a lengthy description of a second aspect of the GPC: how the program was to be implemented on the Indian

---

Bruce Dawson holds an MA in history from the University of Saskatchewan. He heads Prairie Historical Insight, a company which conducts historical research and event planning for heritage organizations.

reserves of Canada. Framed in patriotic fervour, the methods were similar to those being employed on private lands. The sum of $300,000 was advanced from the War Appropriation to be spent on the agricultural reserves of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The money was for machinery, implements, seed and livestock. The Inspector of Indian Agencies for southern Saskatchewan, W.M. Graham, was hired as the Commissioner for the reserve operations of the GPC.

However, in application, the two phases of the GPC programs were quite distinct. Under the program initiated on the reserves, the Indian Commissioner was given power to lease, without band consent, reserve lands for grazing, cultivation, or other purposes. As well, the Commissioner was given ultimate control over the spending of funds from band accounts. The allocation of these powers went against the rights guaranteed in the treaties, and thus necessitated changes to the Indian Act. However, government officials seemed unconcerned about the impact these changes would have on reserve residents. They also seemed unfazed by the significant shift the Indian Act amendments would have upon the department's attitude towards First Nations farming initiatives. During the debates in the House of Commons on the proposed changes to the Indian Act, Minister for Indian Affairs Arthur Meighen concluded his thoughts by curtly stating "We will still leave him enough to trap on, but even if we did not thirty bushels of wheat to an acre is a lot better than a few squirrels caught by the Indian" (*Debates*, 1918, 1050). Despite the concerns of a handful of Members of Parliament, the Indian Act was changed and the GPC became fully operational.

Graham commenced operations for the GPC in March of 1918. His plan had three goals: firstly, to lease as much land as feasible to non-aboriginal farmers; secondly, to create and equip a series of government-run Greater Production farms on reserve lands; and the third goal was to stimulate increased agricultural productivity amongst the reserve residents. The goals sounded laudable and completely appropriate to the spirit and intent of the mandate of the Department of Indian Affairs. It soon became evident, however, that Graham and the other department administrators had less commendable objectives for the project. These viewpoints would cast doubt upon Meighen's flippant statement: "I do not think we need waste any time in sympathy for the Indian, for I am pretty sure his interests will be looked after by the Commissioner" (*Debates*, 1918, 1049).

Of the three activity areas of the program, the one which should have received the most attention and interest on behalf of the department was the effort to increase agricultural productivity on reserves amongst the reserve residents. Not only was the infrastructure in place for reserve agriculture, and a labour pool at hand, but also the promotion of agriculture by reserve residents was supposedly a core function of the department. However, by 1918 the Department of Indian Affairs officials had been operating for over twenty years on the philosophy that First Nations peoples made poor and unenthusiastic farmers. Meighen personified this attitude during the April, 1918 House of Commons Debates when, amongst the aforementioned comments, he stated: "We would be only too glad to have the Indian use this land if he would; production by him would be just as valuable as production by anybody else. But he will not cultivate this land..." (*Debates*, 1049).

The reserve farming program operated much as it had prior to the advent of the GPC. None of the War Appropriation money was used to enhance the work of individual reserve farmers. Of the total appropriation of $375,000 (another

$75,000 had been allocated in 1919), only $37,364.64, or 10.04% was spent on projects for reserves without Greater Production farms. A majority of this amount was spent on the purchase of cows and hogs to be raised on Graham's former Agency, the File Hills Colony. A sum of $2,062.42 was spent on the purchase of a tractor for Alexander's reserve in Alberta and on the cost of one season's operation. When G.H. Race, the Agent for the reserve, suggested to Graham the potential benefits of using the tractor for the reserve farmers, Graham replied in a March 27, 1918 letter: "If you are under the impression that the tractor is to be used by the Indian farmers, you are quite mistaken, as this is to be run entirely separate by Mr. Laight and more as a home farm for Greater Production"(NA, RG 10, File 110/34-1-136). Purchases of seed, machinery and labour continued therefore to be made with funds from either the farmers' individual accounts or from the common band account, with all purchases subject to approval by either Deputy Superintendent-General Scott or Commissioner Graham. Since neither of these men had much faith in the abilities of reserve farmers, requests for machinery necessary to increase acreage and production were often refused.

Despite these in-house discouragements, the reserve farmers approached the Greater Production Campaign with vigour. Agents commented in their monthly reports on how well the farmers were taking to the call for increased production levels. Some, such as S.L. MacDonald of the Battleford Agency, were hopeful that "a far larger acreage will be under crop next year than ever before"(Glenbow, M1781). The season-end report issued by D.C. Scott noted that "a great measure of success" was met with in an increasing number of individual Indian farmers.

The reserve farming aspect of the GPC was really a non-factor in the overall program. Operations continued much as they had before the program and as they did after the shutdown of the Campaign. At best, it could be suggested that agricultural production grew during the years of the GPC, although the numbers would suggest that the rate of growth would have occurred with or without the GPC. At its worst, the significant legal clout of the War Measures Act, combined with the department focus upon the government farm and leasing aspects of the GPC, likely combined to stop the small steps which the reserve farmers had made towards the individual farming model desired by the government (Osuma, 166). In reality, this aspect of the GPC was just one more example of how the government's lack of faith in reserve farmers allowed others to profit, and an opportunity to develop a productive and more self-sufficient reserve agriculture program passed by. More bluntly, in his 1921 memorandum R.N. Wilson stated:

> The last mentioned feature of the "Greater Production" activity (the assisting of Indians to extend their individual farming), while it was really the only commendable undertaking of the four, was also the most neglected, and the farming efforts of the Indians were interfered with, retarded and discouraged in a number of ways in favour of the Government farm which was given right of way over everything (Wilson, 22).

The government farm operation to which Wilson referred was the most controversial as well as the most crucial element of Graham's GPC plan. Under this phase of the Campaign, a number of grain farms were to be established on reserve lands and operated separately from the reserve administration. The department kept any profits generated by the farm for the Commissioner to use at his discretion. Not surprisingly, these farms were the focus of most of Graham's attention and dollars.

NA-2585-1, courtesy Glenbow Archives, Calgary, Alberta

Many new pieces of farming equipment were purchases exclusively for use on the GPC farms on the Blackfoot Reserve, including the 15 binders and 3 oil pull tractors seen at work in September 1920.

In the spring of 1918, Graham chose five reserves upon which to establish his GPC farms. His next endeavour was to secure the reserve residents' permission to use the land. Under the War Measures Act, he could have expropriated any land he wished, but force was not needed as the reserve members wished to support the patriotic nature of the program. Most of the reserves agreed to allow Graham to use their lands for token rental fees. The members of the Blood Reserve in Alberta, under the surrender signed on May 30, 1918, provided the government "the free use of whatever land on the Blood Indian reserve it may require for the greater production of food producing grains"(NA, RG 10, Volume 7102). The conditions specified by the Blood peoples were that reserve labour be used when possible; that the operations be funded by the government; and that the "land be returned to the Indians for farming purposes" when no longer needed for greater production purposes. The land claimed from the reserves was impressive, with a total acreage of 20,880. On the Blackfoot Reserve in Alberta, two farms were established: one of 5,500 acres, another of 2,500 acres. The GPC farm on the Blood Reserve contained 4,880 acres. In Saskatchewan, 3,500-acre farms were set up on both the Muscowpetung and Cowessess Reserves, and a 1,000-acre farm on the Assiniboine Reserve. With the land secured, Graham began purchasing equipment, building farm structures, and hiring work crews to break the land.

The scale of the operations launched in 1918 was impressive and expensive. In the first fourteen months of operations, Graham spent a total of $305,486.81 on purchasing tractors, equipment and building buildings for the GPC farms. The mounting bills did not preclude Meighen from boasting of the program in the House of Commons. In recounting Graham's 1918 efforts, Meighen proudly stated that "the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs is now the largest farmer in the Dominion," with a broken acreage totally 20,448 acres (Debates, 1919, 4664).

Not so enamoured with the direction of this phase of the GPC was Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent General of the Department of Indian Affairs. In a 1919 letter to Arthur Meighen, Scott expressed his belief that the operation of farms by the government, independently from the reserve residents, was a bad idea. Such operations, he felt, were beyond the scope of the department and had only been initiated owing to the requirements of the war. The war being over, Scott believed that the department should cease these "wholly foreign thereto" operations, transfer the farms and equipment to the Solider Settlement Board, and focus upon the goal of the organization: "the rapid civilization of the Indians" (NA, RG10, Volume 4069). Scott's calls fell on deaf ears, and Meighen continued to support his man Graham, to whom he was related by marriage, and his ambitious project.

The farm sales for the 1919, 1920 and 1921 seasons were impressive, averaging over $276,000 per year. The farm-related expenses continued to be high, averaging almost $185,000 per year over the same period. A significant portion of the expense was dedicated to the employment of over 172 employees per year to work the farms. If the start-up costs are not factored in, the profits seem incredible. Graham, who had lofty career ambitions, lost no time in promoting the success of his Campaign: a number of newspapers printed glowing reports of his efforts, and in 1920 he organized a tour of the Blackfoot Indian Reserve for the members of the Imperial Press Association. Each member was given a statistics sheet with the crucial information about the Reserve, including the size of the two Greater Production Farms that were touted as "being worked for the benefit of the Band" (Glenbow, M4738, Box 11).

The election of the Liberal Government in the fall of 1921 left Graham without a patron and brought numerous changes to the Department of Indian Affairs. On February 22, Scott had the privilege of informing Graham that the GPC farms were to be closed, as the need for such operations had passed; moreover, the operation of the farms was beyond the scope of the department and a distraction from the development of department objectives (Glenbow, M8097). Graham was directed to seed the farms with Brome rye grass and sell the machinery at the conclusion of the 1922 operations. It is both interesting and sad to note that Scott was very concerned about ensuring that Graham was focussed on the department objective to advance the Indians – yet his directives were for Graham to develop strategies to return the crop lands to grass and sell the equipment, rather than to use the land and equipment for reserve farming initiatives.

Scott's view regarding the GPC farms was correct, though the suggestion to transfer the land to the Soldier Settlement Board was contrary to the conditions of the surrenders. The Department of Indian Affairs was not in the business of operating large-scale commercial farms and was ill suited for the task. Operations were too spread out and were being administered largely by a generally incapable lot of department officials. Despite these limitations, the GPC appeared to be a profitable enterprise through 1923, with just over $127,000 profit realized on farming operations. However, any profits were only generated at the expense of the five bands: if the government had not in essence expropriated the land with minimal compensation to the reserve residents for the use of their land, the story would have been very different. Based upon the stated rental rates, a total of only $21,918 could have been charged to the department. At the time, cropland was being leased on the reserves under the GPC for $5 per acre and per year.

Therefore, if the government had paid equivalent rental rates, or the land leased to others at a similar rate, rental charges on the same property would have totalled over $490,000.

Looking beyond the great loss of potential rental revenue, the GPC farm program did have a few benefits for the reserve residents. Some casual labour positions – mostly unskilled, manual labour jobs – were created. Another benefit that emanated from the shutdown of the Greater Production farms was the transfer of some of the farmlands to reserve farmers. In 1923, Graham indicated that approximately 7,850 acres of land has been divided amongst over 70 reserve farmers (Glenbow, M8097, File 5). Virtually all of these new farms were established in 1921, with forty-five on the Blackfoot reserve and twenty-five on the Blood Reserve,. For some of the Blood farmers, the establishment of these new farms was a chance to start over after being wiped out in the drought of 1919. These new farms, though, came at a price: any improvements such as fences and buildings, as well as any Greater Production farm equipment, had to be paid for either through the band trust account or by the individual reserve farmer. The new farmers on the Blackfoot reserve were even less fortunate: not only did they have to pay for the equipment, but their band trust account was charged $15,300 for the value of the breaking done on land used by the GPC.

The third aspect of the Greater Production program was focussed upon the leasing of reserve lands to non-native agriculturalists. Unlike the government farm program, the issuing of leases was not a new area of operation for the department. For several years, the department has been in the business of leasing reserve lands for grazing purposes, and the operations had provided a steady income for a number of western reserves. What was new under this phase of the GPC was the leasing of reserve land to non-native farmers for farming operations. The leasing aspect of the GPC proved to be the most lucrative feature of the Greater Production scheme.

When Graham took on the role of Commissioner in February of 1918, many of his first directives were related to the leasing program. In locations that Graham decided should be leased, the reserve residents had few options: under the coercive powers Graham had been granted by the War Measures Act, he could claim any lands he wished without the consent of the band. Such was the fate of a number of reserves in the Hobbema Agency, which had several hundred acres claimed by Order-in-Council on April 15, 1918. Where negotiations occurred, Graham made use of the concept of "advance payments" to encourage the process. On March 18, 1918, Graham sent $5,000 and surrender forms to Agent John Gooderham on the Blackfoot reserve, telling him to "use as much of this amount as you think necessary"(Glenbow, M1784). R.N. Wilson recorded other similar forms of bribery and intimidation issued by Agents and Graham to encourage surrenders. These examples included threats of starvation, withholding use of band-owned farming equipment to non-supporters, dangling chief's medals before a non- supporter, and using the Mounted Police to force a second vote after the first did not support surrender (Wilson, 6, 24).

Graham was able to establish a remarkable total of GPC leases: eighty-one grazing leases were let, as well as thirty-nine leases for farming and three for both farming and grazing. Over half of the Agencies on the prairies had either a farming or grazing lease on one of their reserves. Total acreages were high: on February 28, 1919, Scott reported to Meighen that 310,000 acres were leased for

grazing purposes and 22,000 acres for farming (NA, RG 10, Volume 4069). The reported income from these leases was equally impressive. Graham claims to have collected $440,009 in rentals between 1918 and 1923, inclusive (Glenbow, M8097, File 5); he also made note that there was still $121,482 due and collectable on property rentals. This amount appears to have been written off, as the account to which these rentals was being paid was closed by the department in 1924, and rental income related to these leases does not appear in any other revenue account for the department. This assertion is supported by the sympathetic tone in which Minister of Indian Affairs Charles Stewart referred to the desperate financial straits a number of the defaulters were in as a result of the high rental charges to which they had agreed (*Debates*, 1922, 2155). George Gooderham suggests as a possible reason for the sympathy that many of the leases were given to friends of government officials to speculate in the booming wheat market of 1918-19 (Glenbow, M3874, File 1). If such was the case, then the government's decision not to pursue the defaulters was extremely costly to the various bands: due to the government's inactivity the reserve communities, through no fault of their own, were deprived of over 20% of their potential revenue under the leasing program. This seeming mismanagement was a strange course of action for a government whose vision of "civilizing" the reserve residents was based largely upon the concept of "one must pay for everything one gets."

In fact, it was this vision of "paying one's own way" which was used as the primary justification for Scott to close out the leasing aspect of the program. In the letter to Graham in which he announced the cancellation of the GPC, Scott stated: "We cannot expect the Indians to sit by and derive an unearned income from the work of others"(Glenbow, M8097). This comment is interesting as on at least one reserve, the band was paying the government to lease their lands for them. Under the GPC surrender on the Blood reserve the department retained ten percent of the lease amount as an administration fee, to the ire of the reserve chiefs. Despite the loss of income for both the government and the bands, a majority of the leases were cancelled at their expiry dates, and the leasing program of the GPC was terminated.

The leasing portion of the GPC was the most successful aspect of the program. Despite the underhanded or intimidating tactics used by department officials to gain some of the leases, complaints cannot be found from a majority of the reserves where leases were granted. The leases did generate revenue for the communal trust accounts of the reserves. The inability of the government to collect the significant outstanding rentals raised the question of whose interests the department officials were working towards. In fairness, though, perhaps the accounts truly were uncollectable in light of the economic recession experienced across the country in the early 1920s. Overall, the leasing program was a relatively straightforward operation for Graham, as there was a long history of renting reserve lands by the government. The only major problems that were noted in regards to the rentals were those which plagued the Blood reserve and became the focus of the memorandum by R.N. Wilson.

Despite the tremendous number of ways Graham could intimidate or pressure a reserve to sign surrenders, there were some significant cases of resistance by the First Nations peoples. A handful of reserves, such as Thunderchild's Reserve in Saskatchewan, simply voted against any surrender agreements, no matter the pressures placed upon them. Two bands with specific concerns turned to their

church officials to write out their complaints and take them to Government. On February 10, 1920, the Anglican Bishop of Saskatchewan, J.A. Newnham, wrote to D.C. Scott on behalf of the Sioux reserve near Dundurn: in this letter Newnham stated that Graham, whom he accused of having "Greater Production on the brain," was placing very distressing pressures upon the reserve members to surrender land (NA, RG10, Volume 4070). Similarly, the Blackfoot people turned to their Anglican minister, H.S.Gibbon Stocken, to draft a letter to the Department regarding their concerns about the GPC (Glenbow, M4738, Box 29); specifically, the band members wanted the officials to stop the lessors on the reserve from cutting hay on non-leased, band-controlled lands. In support of their claim, the band members made Stocken include a statement explaining that they had readily consented to the leases so as to support the Greater Production initiative, but that they had been assured that the department would guarantee that enough hay lands would be left for the band members' needs. In both cases it would appear that the bands' requests were heeded, as no surrenders were taken on the Sioux reserve nor further complaints by the Blackfoot Reserve members.

A more significant resistance took place on the Poundmaker reserve in Saskatchewan. The biography of John Tootoosis outlines the incident in which the people of Poundmaker's reserve utilized legal counsel to challenge the GPC (Goodwill and Sluman, 119-22). In 1920, S.L. MacDonald, Agent for the Battleford Agency, announced to the people of Poundmaker's reserve his intention to establish a GPC lease of five sections of land for a non-Aboriginal farmer to raise sheep. The community was unanimous in not wanting to lease any land, and decided to use some of their band funds to consult a lawyer in Battleford. The lawyer recommended building a fence around the disputed sections: this would signify use and make them exempt from seizure under the GPC. Despite threats by the Agent and a showdown meeting with Graham, the band members resisted; and Graham backed off from trying to claim the property, bitterly exclaiming that they wouldn't take care of the land and were wasting it when they could be making money from it. The elation of John Tootoosis and the rest of the delegation was captured in the statement, "They had confronted the dreaded Graham successfully; they had not been arrested and jailed and Poundmaker land was safe again, at least for the present. It was a taste of new freedom. They all felt good, very good about it. It was the way their ancestors must have felt going home after a successful raid or battle" (Goodwill and Sluman, 121).

The most significant resistance to the policies and procedures of the GPC, both in terms of complexity and impact, was the campaign launched by the Blood people. For several years prior to the implementation of the GPC, the government had been anxious for the residents of the Blood Reserve, the largest reserve in the country, to surrender significant portions of their lands. Despite the various tactics and pleas of the department officials, the reserve residents always denied these requests. The efforts of the government, though, had built a strained and distrustful relationship between the band members and the Department of Indian Affairs.

When the GPC proposal was put before the Blood reserve members on March 23, they signed the surrender on the basis of the patriotic nature of the program. On May 30, Graham placed a new surrender before the reserve residents to "update" the surrender taken on March 23. The most significant clause in the new surrender was the agreement "to allow the Government the free use of whatever

land on the Blood Indian reserve it may require for the greater production of food producing grains." Believing the department was acting in good faith, the band members agreed to the new arrangement. They did not foresee the greed of Graham, who established the Greater Production Farm as well as leasing out approximately 90,000 acres of reserve land for grazing. It was the changes in the new surrender agreements and Graham's operation of the grazing leases that caused the Blood people to ask R.N. Wilson, a former Indian Agent on the Blood and Peigan Reserves, to act as their spokesman.

From 1918 through 1920, Wilson wrote many letters of complaints to the government on behalf of his Blood friends. Also writing the occasional complaint letter was D.L. Matheson, a barrister in the town of MacLeod, and also a friend to many of the reserve residents. The departmental replies to these letters were polite but non-committal, as Scott considered the writing campaign to be "overzealous" on the part of the authors and warranting little investigation (NA, RG 10, Volume 7201). Through this period, the actions of both Wilson and Matheson had been taken out of friendship and concern for the Blood people. In 1920, this situation changed.

After the collapse of the cattle ranching economy in the winter of 1918–19, and the poor crop of 1919, the Blood people became bolder with their resistance efforts. On May 11 Shot-On-Both-Sides, head chief for the Blood Indians, granted R.N. Wilson power of attorney to "communicate to the Department of Indian Affairs, the Members of the Dominion House of Commons or to the Public Press of Canada such representations in the interests of the Blood Indians concerning the management of the Blood Reserve as may in his opinion be necessary to secure"(NA, RG10, Volume 7201). The form went on to list ten specific claims which Wilson had the authority to pursue on behalf of the community. While a few First Nations peoples had consulted lawyers to act on their behalf, it is believed that Shot-On-Both-Sides' actions were the first instance of a chief granting power of attorney to a non-government official to take up a case against the department.

Wilson soon laid his case before the federal government. On May 31, he submitted to D.C. Scott a memorandum signed by 201 Blood Reserve members and containing forty-five points of contention for the Blood people over the operations on the reserve since the GPC began operation. The concerns of the reserve residents fell within three areas. Firstly, the surrender process was improperly conducted and allowed many GPC activities to take place on the reserve that were not desired by the community. Secondly, the mismanagement of the grazing aspect of the GPC directly led to the starvation of most of the reserve-owned cattle and horses. Thirdly, the mismanagement of the GPC farm directly impacted the ability of the reserve farmers to properly conduct their operations.

The reaction by Scott was one of reflection. While not prepared to fully accept the charges of the memorandum, he admitted to Meighen in a June 8, 1920 letter that proper explanations were lacking from the department officials as to the situation on the reserve. Scott also commented that Wilson had been the last competent agent on the Blood reserve and that his representations should be considered. Perhaps the most telling comment of his feelings about the Blood reserve situation was revealed when he stated: "while no doubt the holding of a judicial investigation would clear the air, I am not sure that the

department would come out of it very well. While I have no objection personally to this ordeal, I think it would be better policy to avoid it" (NA, RG 10, Volume 7102).

The Department was slow to initiate any investigation: nearly a year after sending their memorandum, the Bloods had heard nothing about the issue other than a couple of notices to Wilson stating the subject was being dealt with. Dissatisfied with the way their concerns were treated, Wilson went public with the grievances. In March, he began giving questions to two members of the House of Commons, Mr. Molloy and Mr. White, to ask during the April question period. Little came of these efforts, and in May of 1922 Wilson published a booklet titled *Our Betrayed Wards*, which contained the 1920 memorandum as well as subsequent comments by the Blood people and was distributed to the members of the House of Commons and the national media. The department finally responded to the Blood memorandum on August 17, 1922 — over two years after it had been submitted. In short, the department sympathized with losses suffered by the reserve residents, but found few faults with Graham or the department's administration of the GPC project and DIA. Any existing problems, it was stated, had been caused by the former agents with whom the department boasted of having dispensed.

The Chiefs of the Blood Reserve replied on December 20, 1922 with a long and embittered reaction to the government's dealing with their claims. In the letter, one elder is quoted as saying: "we were hopeful of tangible results from the long expected visit of Mr. Stewart but all he has done for us is to send us a big bundle of the Commissioner's lies" (NA, RG10, Volume 7102). The chiefs went on to ask the Minister to reconsider their calls for an outside investigation, noting "you will observe the granting of this request will be in line with the policy already announced by you of giving us full information about our affairs." The letter by the chiefs also poignantly highlighted that the double standards between the government's goals for the reserve agriculture program and the operations managed by the department had not been lost on them. The chiefs described the immense efforts the Blood farmers undertook to develop their farms and produce thirty-eight bushels to the acre; in contrast, they then commented on the government efforts on the GPC farm, stating that "the farming work, though many times more costly than ours, was so badly managed that only 6 bushels of wheat per acre were threshed from the limited acreage that was fit to be cut at all." Later, referring to the land breaking of 1918 they stated: "it remained for this Commissioner to show us the other extreme, to teach us how badly such work could really be done,... we saw a huge acreage of sod on our reserve so badly broken that when the Commissioner's fields were finished his men had to go into them and burn large patches of standing grass so as to make the Greater Production fields look like plowed land from a distance."

By the spring of 1923, the GPC was finished as a department program and generated little interest in official circles. On the Blood reserve the leases had expired, the GPC farm had been closed, and much of the land been transferred to reserve farmers. The resistance staged by the Blood peoples was at an end, but its results and impacts were notable. They had recognized their limitations in understanding the legal framework of the government operations, and hired skilled, knowledgeable and committed representatives to act on their behalf. Through these representatives, the concerns of the Bloods were taken beyond the Agent's

door to Ottawa to be brought before the Department, the House of Commons, and the national press. Though they did not get their requested public inquiry, they did gain a meeting with Minister Charles Stewart in 1921 and were able to prompt the Department to take the unusual step of changing the department policies for the benefit of the reserve residents. The move to close the GPC farm prior to the shutdown of the program, and to pledge to provide the reserve residents with access to all the equipment they needed, was a positive response to the Blood grievances by the department, although these steps should have been the standard practice for reserve farming operations from the beginning. The most lasting impact of the Blood resistance was the one that their actions had upon the department for amending the Indian Act in 1927, which solely allowed reserve residents to hire lawyers and representatives approved by the Superintendent General.

The Greater Production Campaign was a relatively expensive, highly publicized government initiative which was not very different from many that came before it. The department produced glowing reports of how the GPC helped the Reserve residents; but in reality the project served largely to advance the career of W.M. Graham and to pay for department expenses. Most of the perceived gains for the First Nations peoples, such as new equipment for reserve farmers, rental income and developed land, were all supposed to be ongoing operations of the Department of Indian Affairs and, ostensibly, would have happened with or without the GPC. The benefits were enough for the government to be able to highlight its 'progressive' efforts on the reserves, but not enough to move the reserve residents beyond the fringes of western society. Viewed in this light, Arthur Meighen was wrong and the GPC was not better than a few squirrels caught by the Indians.

References

Carter, Sarah. 1990. *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy*. Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Glenbow Museum and Archives, Calgary: Papers of William H. Graham (M 8097); Papers of George Gooderham (M 4738, M 3974); Blood Agency Papers (M 1788); Battleford Agency Papers (M 1781).

Goodwill, Jean and Norma Sluman. 1984. *John Tootoosis*. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications.

Government of Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Reports*, 1910–1932.

Government of Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1918–1924.

Government of Canada, House of Commons, *Sessional Papers*, 1910–1924.

Miller, J.R. 1989. *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

National Archives of Canada, Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs Records (RG 10); Papers of Arthur Meighen (MG 26, series I).

Osuma, Rob. 1995. "Blackfoot Legal Culture: Wrongful Injuries Law on the Canadian Blackfoot Reserves, 1880–1920." MA Thesis, University of Calgary.

Wilson, R.N. 1921. *Our Betrayed Wards: A Story of "Chicanery, Infidelity and the Prostitution of Trust."* Ottawa: n.p.

As *Plain(s)* as the Ear can Hear

Jean L. Okimâsis

To some people the Saskatchewan landscape may be just an endless and boring flatland dotted with small towns, a few larger centres, and fewer cities. What these people don't realize is that there is a rich history reflected within these communities. This history is in the loud echo of sounds that resonate throughout this province each day. They are strange sounds, yet not many question them; they are made while others listen. Each day the inhabitants of Saskatchewan make these sounds. They are heard in the southeast, in the southwest, then on to the north and northwest. They are the sounds of the Cree language. They are in the names of many of the towns, villages and cities, in the names of lakes, rivers and landmarks, and in the names of streets. More often than not the pronunciation of these place names does not do justice to the Cree sounds, yet at times the English spelling is close to the Cree writing system now in use. It is often just the pronunciation which has been most changed. I want to introduce the sounds of the Plains Cree dialect, the sounds appropriate to many of Saskatchewan's place names, before presenting a few of these place names and the ways in which their pronunciations have been changed.

There are five dialects of Cree spoken across Canada from Quebec to Alberta, and in some settlements in British Columbia. Three of these dialects are spoken in Saskatchewan; so it is little wonder that Cree has been used for many place names, some of which are easily recognized as being Cree while others are a bit more difficult to decipher. Still others are spelled so oddly that one can barely recognize them as Cree words, because they were recorded by people who used English sounds that they thought would best represent the sounds they heard. Consequently, it is almost impossible to translate some of them. However, there is now a writing system which seems to accommodate the unique sounds and prosody of Cree.

The Standard Roman Orthography (SRO)[1]

Historically, Cree was not a written language; but a writing system has evolved over the past seventy-five years and has been the standard for almost

Jean Okimâsis heads the Department of Indian Languages, Literatures and Linguistics at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, University of Regina. Her Cree language textbook and tape set received two 1999 Saskatchewan Book Award nominations.

three decades.[2] This standard roman orthography (SRO) represents the sounds of Cree quite well; and although symbols from the same alphabet are used, it is not based on the English spelling system. The SRO is specifically for Cree and is now used in many publications.

Over and above dialect differences, there are 17 distinct sounds in each of the Plains (Y), Woods (TH), and Swampy (N) Cree dialects. In order to represent these sounds, only 14 of the 26 letters of the English alphabet are needed to write Cree. The following are *never* used:

b, d, f, g, j, q, u, v, x, z

Additionally, the symbols l and r are used only for borrowed words which retain them, or in the Moose (L) and Attikamek (R) dialects. These two dialects are not spoken in Saskatchewan.

Because English has many more distinct phonetic sounds than alphabetic symbols, a number of symbol combinations (digraphs) are used. For example, the digraphs below contribute to the representation of at least 38 distinct sounds in English as spoken in Saskatchewan. However, these combinations are never used in writing Cree:

ch, sh, ng, aa, ae, ai, ao, au, ea, ee, ei, eo, eu, ia, ie, ii, io, iu, oa, oe, oi, oo, ou, ua, ue, ui, uo, uu

The only exception to this is the digraph "th," which is used for writing Woods Cree, the only dialect which has a sound similar to the English voiced "th" sound (as in "then"). Plains Cree does not have this sound and so this digraph is not needed. When Cree dialects, such as those in eastern Canada, or Ojibwa dialects, including Saulteaux in Saskatchewan, have a sound similar to English "sh," the symbol š is used. None of the western Cree dialects have this sound, so this symbol does not exist in Plains Cree transcriptions.

Consonants: c, h, k, m, n, p, s, t, w, y

There are ten distinct consonants in Plains Cree. Although most of these consonants are pronounced like their English counterparts, c, k, p, and t are not. Note the following examples:

- 'c' is pronounced like the 'ts' in the English word 'pets', or in some regional preferences one may hear the English 'ch' sound found in the word 'catch'. In all these cases the sounds are represented by the symbol 'c' alone. Furthermore, 'c' is never used to represent a 'k' sound as it does in 'cook', nor is it ever used to represent an 's' sound as in English 'cent.'
- 'k' represents a sound between the 'g' in 'gull' and the 'k' in 'kill', and is closest to the sound in the English word 'skill'. The sound may vary between 'g' and 'k', but in the spelling of words only 'k' is used.
- 'p' represents a sound between the 'p' in 'pill' and 'b' in 'bill', and is closest to the sound in the English word 'spill.'
- 't' represents a sound between the 't' in 'tall' and the 'd' in 'doll', and is closest to the sound in the English word 'stall.'

Examples:

Initially	*Medially*	*Finally*
cêskwa - wait	*akihcikê* - count	*anohc* - now/today
kîspin - if	*akihcikê* - count	*sikâk* - a skunk
pêhin - wait for me	*nâpêw* - a man	*sîsîp* - a duck
tâpwê - truly/really	*âta* - although	*osit* - his/her foot

Vowels: a, i, o, â, î, ô, ê

There are seven distinct vowels in Plains Cree, divided into three short and four long vowels. Like their English counterparts in the examples below, the three short vowel sounds are spoken quickly. They are written exactly like the English vowels, but they represent only specific vowel sounds of Cree and do not vary in value as they often do in English. The following are examples of those specific vowels sounds.

• 'a' sounds like English 'a' in 'apply' or the 'u' in 'umpire.' It never sounds like the 'a' in English 'cat' or the 'a' in 'cape.'

• 'i' sounds like English 'i' in 'bit.' It never sounds like the 'i' in 'bite.'

• 'o' sounds like the English 'o' in 'occasion' or the 'u' in 'put.' It never sounds like the 'o' in 'hot' or 'hotel', or the 'u' in 'putt.'

Examples:

Initially	*Medially*	*Finally*
awas - go away/get out!	*âstam* - come here!	*ôta* - right here
iskwêw - a woman	*nikik* - an otter	*êkosi* - that's enough/so
otina - take it	*kotak* - another	*pêho* - wait

On the other hand, the four long vowel sounds are enunciated slowly. In addition to having comparable English sounds, these vowels have a special mark which indicates that the sound is long. This mark may be a circumflex (as used here) or a straight line, called a macron, placed above the vowel. Note, however, that the long "ê" does not have an equivalent short "e." Consider the following examples:

• 'â' sounds like the English 'a' in 'fa' (as in do, re, me, fa...); never like the 'a' in 'fate.'

• 'î' sounds like the English 'i' in 'machine' or the 'ee' of 'meet'; never like the 'i' in 'shine.'

• 'ô' sounds like the English 'o' in 'pose.'

• 'ê' sounds like the English 'a' in 'acorn' and 'fate' or the 'ay' in 'hay.' It is not pronounced like the so-called 'long-e' sound of English (i.e. not like the 'e' of 'me' or the 'ee' of 'meet', etc.; see 'î').

Examples:

Initially	*Medially*	*Finally*
âstam - come here	*tânisi* - hello/how are you?	*tâniwâ* - where is s/he?
twahikan - pounded meat	*cîki* - near	*sîpî* - stretch! (as in exercise)
ôki - these	*pôna* - make a fire	*pasikô* - get up!
êkwa - and	*mêkwâc* - presently	*kîwê* - go home!

To illustrate the importance of using the diacritic mark properly, consider the following minimal pairs:

with macron		without macron
sâkahikan - a lake	→	*sakahikan* - a nail(building)
asâm - a snowshoe	→	*asam* - feed him/her/it
mâci- - begin/start	→	*maci-* - evil/bad
mâcî - go hunting	→	*macî* - isn't that so?
kîsitêw - it is cooked	→	*kisitêw* - it is hot

Naturally, the use of an entirely different long vowel will result in a different word; but so can placing the diacritic above a different vowel:

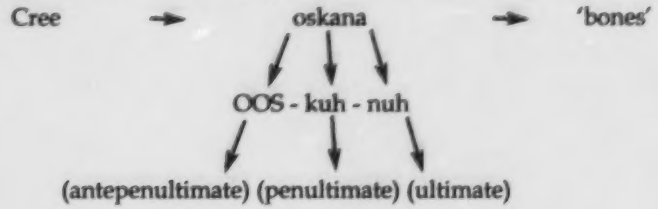
tâniwâ - where is s/he?	→	*tâniwê* - where is it?
tâpwê - truly/really	→	*têpwê* - yell/shout!
niyanân - us/we	→	*niyânan* - five

Consequently, the circumflex or diacritic marking above the long vowels is extremely important. Misplacing the length mark can even lead to some nasty or impolite statements. I need not elaborate on that aspect, but it can prove to be most embarrassing indeed.

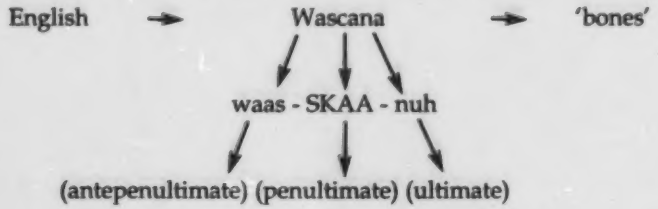
Cree Prosody (kree PRAH-suh-dee)

Another equally important aspect of the Cree language, and of any other language, is the stress or intonation pattern. The difference in the stress patterns for the Cree and English languages has resulted in many mispronunciations of Cree by non-speakers; and conversely the Cree have some very distinct versions of many English words.

The three-syllable Cree word *oskana* 'bones' below indicates that the main stress falls on the third last syllable from the right (i.e. the antepenultimate). In a longer word, every second syllable to the left of the antepenultimate is stressed. This stress pattern of Cree is so structured that it is quite easy for a non-speaker to figure out where the antepenultimate stress will occur:



In contrast to the Cree stress pattern, the English pronunciation of this same word places stress on the penultimate or second last syllable. As a result of this difference, the English version of the Cree word does not reflect the exact Cree sounds:



The stress patterns for these two languages are just not compatible, and unless one is cognizant of this state of affairs, mispronunciation of the Cree words will continue. The English letters and sounds used to write and pronounce this Cree word have further contributed to its mispronunciation.

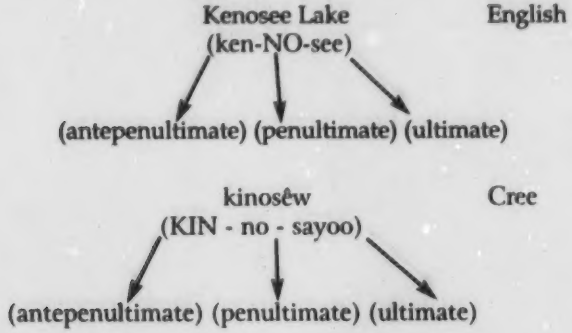
I couldn't resist using Wascana as the first example because it occurs in so

many instances throughout the city of Regina. For instance, the Wascana View subdivision by itself includes *oskana* for many of their streets: Wascana Mews, Wascana Gate, Wascana Glen, Wascana Meadows, Wascana Greens, Wascana Circle, Wascana Highlands, Wascana Ridge, and Wascana Vista. Then in other parts of the city there is Wascana Street, Wascana Park, Wascana Creek, Wascana Lake, Wascana Parkway, Wascana Rehabilitation Centre, and so on. Oddly enough there was, at one time, an establishment that spelled the word correctly but the pronunciation was incorrect: Oskana Meats, pronounced (oss-SCAN-nuh). I may have missed other place names in the city that use this word, but these examples are sufficient. One may wonder whether the founders of the city knew what the word meant when they decided on names for these various places.

Other Place Names

As we indulge in musings about Saskatchewan place names and their assorted pronunciations, we get involved in learning not only about Cree, the language of my ancestors, but also about certain facts of which you may not be aware. On the other hand you might be familiar with some of these places or even live in one of the towns that are mentioned below. Of some 250 First Nations names that are mentioned in Bill Barry's (1997) *People Places: Saskatchewan and Its Names*, I chose only a few that I thought would be of general interest. The full stress pattern of Cree is shown only for the first place name so one can refer to it for quick reference.

a) **Kenosee:** I chose this because I grew up on the White Bear reserve just east of "fish lake," as my father used to say. *kinosêw* means "fish" in Cree: as I was preparing this essay I remember thinking how when I was a child my father was trying to show off his English by saying "fish lake"; but now, as I look at the differences in stress I understand that he used English out of necessity because he probably couldn't pronounce the unfamiliar 'Kenosee.'



b) **Tatagwa:** A lady phoned me some time ago asking if it was true that this word meant "flat land," so I have chosen it as an example. As you will notice many of the examples have three syllables and therefore will often result in a difference in stress. In this particular word there is an additional difference in pronunciation, and the English does not sound at all like its Cree equivalent:

Tatagwa English
(tuh-*TIE*-gwuh)

tahtahkwâw Cree
(TUHT-tuh-kwow)
'It is flat, bald, plain' (referring to the land)

c) **Tagaske:** This example is similar to the previous one in regards to stress. It also raises another aspect of spoken Cree, namely the collapsing of vowels. It is much like the spoken question, "ja eet jet?' in English, for "Did you eat yet?" Collapsing of vowels also occurs in Cree, and very often it will be spelled in its collapsed form, especially if the writer is not aware of this phenomenon. If that is what happened in this case then this name could very well mean "cold land/country," "nice land," or "flat land." Unfortunately, nobody has been able to verify the original name.

Tagaske English
(tuh-GAS-skee)

tahkaskiy Cree
(TUHK-kus-skee)
'cold land/country'

***takahkaskiy**
(tuh-KUHK-kus-skee)
'nice land'

***tahtahkwaskiy**
(tuht-TUHK-kwus-skee)
'flat/bald/plain land'

d) **Waskesiu:** Everybody in Saskatchewan knows this townsite, located in the national park north of Prince Albert. The name itself, which is the Cree word for "elk" or "red deer," represents an excellent exampie of collapsing of vowels. Although the stress has been maintained on the third syllable from the right, it is still not pronounced at all like Cree. In the Cree example you will notice the extra syllable at the beginning of the word which may have been almost inaudible to the untrained ear — yet it is never left out in Cree. Perhaps it was not included in the spelling because this initial syllable is not stressed.

Waskesiu English
(WAA-skih-sue)

wâwâskêsiw Cree
(waa-WAAS-skay-sue)
'elk/red deer'

e) **Manitou** Beach: Manitou Beach is located a few kilometers from the town of Watrous. It is well known for its healing waters, its mineral spa and for Camp Easter Seal. The English and Cree spellings are nearly identical and the stress is the same for both, but the pronunciation of the vowels is different. English

pronunciation, in this and many other place names, results in something almost unrecognizable to Cree ears:

Manitou Beach — English
(MAN-ni-too)

manitow — Cree
(MUH-ni-toe)
'Great Spirit'

f) **Nekaneet:** Nekaneet is a reserve located in the southwest corner of the province, near the Cypress Hills south of Maple Creek. The reserve was named after its chief, *kâ-nîkânît*; the literal translation from the Cree is "one who leads/ one who is foremost." By omitting the first syllable, however, we are left with a word that has no meaning. The stress pattern is correct, but the unstressed long vowel in the penultimate syllable has been shortened to fit an English pattern:

Nekaneet — English
(NEE-guh-neet)

kâ-nîkânît — Cree
(kaa-NEE-kaa-neet)
'Leader/Foremost Man'

g) **Mistawasis:** This reserve is located northwest of Prince Albert, and it is also named after a chief. Here is an example of a definite difference in the placement of stress, fitting English rather than Cree. Except for the absence of the length mark, it is spelled correctly:

Mistawasis — English
(miss-tuh-WAA-sis)

mistawâsis — Cree
(miss-TUH-waa-sis)
'Big Child'

h) **Missinipe:** This name for a resort on the Churchill river, some distance north of La Ronge, has the same anglicized stress pattern as Mistawasis, and as in the former example it will grate on the ears of anyone who reacts unfavourably to an English pronunciation of Cree place names:

Missinipe — English
(miss-si-NIP-pee)

misi-nipiy — Cree
(mi-SI-ni-pee)
'big water'

i) **Nipawin:** This example exhibits the correct stress pattern only if it is derived from nipâwin "sleeping place" or *nipiwin* "death." However, it is said to be derived from the word meaning "standing place," which then should be *nîpawi-win*. Even collapsed, this should have been pronounced as (nip-PAW-win).

Nipawin English
(NI-puh-win)

nîpawiwin Cree
(nee-PUH-wi-win)
'standing place.'

*nipâwin (NI-paa-win) 'sleeping place.'
*nipiwin (NI-po-win)....'death'

j) **Muskoday:** Muskoday is a reserve just southeast of Prince Albert. The name is very close to the original Cree, but with the loss of the final [w]. So *maskotêw* becomes Muskoday. This might even be an influence from Saulteaux (another Algonquian language), which regularly loses final [w]:
Muskoday English
(MUSS-koh-day)

maskotêw Cree
(MUS-sko-tayoo)
'bald prairie'

k) **Meskanaw:** Meskanaw is one of the few names that have a remarkably accurate spelling as far as the letters used to write Cree are concerned. However, its seems that the closer the spelling comes to accurately depicting Cree sounds, the further the English pronunciation strays from the original intention:
Meskanaw English
(MESS-kun-nah)

mêskanaw Cree
(MACE-kuh-now)
'road / trail'

l) **Moosomin:** Moosomin is the name of both a town (named after the highbush cranberry) and a reserve (named after a chief). English speakers pronounce them both as (MOOSE-min), keeping the stress on the right syllable, but dropping the penultimate syllable. Cree has (MOHS-so-min):
Moosomin English
(MOOSE-min)

môsomin Cree
(MOHS-so-min)
high-bush cranberry

m) **Witchekan** Lake: Witchekan Lake is situated in the northwestern part of the province and in northern Plains Cree territory. The stress pattern is again close, but the long vowel in the unstressed penultimate syllable has been shortened in English. Note that my dialect would have *wihcêkan* instead of *wihcîkan*:
Witchekan Lake English
(WIT-chi-kan)

wihcîkan sâkahikan Cree
(WIH-tsee-kun) (saa-KUH-hih-kun)
It stinks. lake

n) **Kutawa:** This name seems to have retained the Cree stress pattern, but there are a number of possible Cree sources for this word. The name could come from: *katawâw* "it is beautiful"(again with loss of the final [w], as with Muskoday); or from *kâ-tawâk* "there is room" (with loss of final [k], which seems less likely but not impossible); or possibly even from *kotawê* "make a fire," which was suggested to me by the English spelling more than by the pronunciation. This last is unlikely for a place name, though.

Kutawa English
(CUT-tuh-waa)

katawâw Cree
(CUT-tuh-wow)
'it is beautiful.'

***kâ-tawâk**
(KAA-tuh-waak)
'there is room.'

***kotawê**
(KOH-tuh-way)
'make a fire.'

o) **Meewasin:** This is one of the better known Cree words, especially in Saskatoon, where an urban park bears this name. *miywâsin* means "good," but the stress pattern of Meewasin is not! It is unfortunate that Cree words continue to be mistreated by the English alphabet; and it is even more unfortunate that this comparatively recent addition to the list of Saskatchewan place names could not have been introduced with its proper pronunciation:

Meewasin English
(me-WAA-sin)

miywâsin Cree
(MEE-waa-sin)
'It is good / nice.'

p) **Katepwa:** Designating a well-known resort in the scenic Qu'Appelle valley, this name has an English pronunciation based solely on its spelling and not even close to the original Cree **kâ-têpwêt**:

Katepwa English
(kuh-TEP-pwuh)

kâ-têpwêt Cree
(KAA-tay-pwayt)
's/he calls out.'

q) **Kinookimaw:** Kinookimaw, on the other hand, has a pronunciation extremely close to the Cree original, *kinokamâw*. However, the lengthening of the stressed syllable in the English example seems to give us an entirely different word, *kinôkimâw*, which would mean "long chief." Restoring the penultimate vowel from "i" to "a" and leaving the antepenultimate short (though stressed) gives us the desired meaning of "long body of water":

Kinookimaw (ki-NOH-ki-maaw)	English
kinokamâw (ki-NOOK-kuh-maaw) 'a long body of water'	Cree

r) **Wiwa:** This one and the next are my favourites. They are the best examples of what should be reasonably good attempts at Cree spellings, but these spellings have obviously misled English readers into some very odd pronunciations. The Cree word *wîwa* (wee-WUH) has come out as Wiwa (WHYwuh), with stress on the wrong syllable and a completely different vowel. There is no such word in Cree as WHYwuh.

Wiwa Creek (WHY-wuh)	English
wîwa (wee-WUH) 'his wife'	Cree

s) **Notukeu:** And what can I say about Notukeu? Although the stress is basically the same, the pronunciation is based solely on an English reading of the spelling. What's more, nobody seems to be aware of the meaning! For your information, when my husband was looking through the sports page of the newspaper one day, he burst out laughing upon seeing that there is a men's hockey league named after Notukeu, "Not a Queue" (with all possible *double entendres* of the word). In a more serious vein, I wonder if the hockey players know that their league is named after the Cree word, *nôtokêw*, meaning "old woman."

Notukeu (NAH-tuh-cue)	English
nôtokêw (NOO-to-kayoo) 'old woman'	Cree

t) **Saskatchewan:** I wish to conclude with perhaps our most recognizable name. Saskatchewan is a reasonably close approximation of the Cree *kisiskâciwan*, though in this case too the first syllable has been lost. Note that here in Saskatchewan, even non-Cree speakers know to pronounce the final syllable short, as (wun): it is only outside of the province that the English spelling "wan" has led to the pronunciation as (susCATCHuwaan). In Cree there is a secondary stress on the second syllable to the left of the anti-penultimate:

Saskatchewan English
(suss-CATCH-chi-wun)

kisiskâciwan Cree
(kiss-sis-KAA-tsi-wun)
'it is fast flowing.'

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all these place names were in an orthography that represented the actual Cree sounds! This would make history indeed; but sadly reality tells me to wake up because the expense would be too great. Just imagine the cost, what with all the books and maps that would need to be changed, all the signs that would become historical relics! If this was to happen, we may wonder whether other language groups would strive for similar changes or would remain passive. The Cree would be proud to see their place names restored, but just as importantly, the restoration of these place names would increase pride in the language and encourage its preservation.

I hope that this exercise will help at least a few residents of this province to appreciate the contribution contained in the Cree names of Saskatchewan.

Notes

1. The following description of Cree sounds and the SRO is brief. For other more detailed descriptions the reader can consult Okimâsis and Ratt (1999), Wolvengrey (1998), and Wolvengrey (2001).
2. The SRO is not far removed from the spelling system used by the linguist Leonard Bloomfield in the 1920s (see Bloomfield, 1930). C.D. Ellis (1971) suggested revisions to reach a standard orthography, and these were adopted at a 1974 conference in Edmonton.

References

Barry, Bill. 1997. *People Places: Saskatchewan and Its Names*. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center.

Bloomfield, Leonard. 1930. *Sacred Stories of the Sweet Grass Cree*. National Museum of Canada, Bulletin No. 60, Ottawa: F.A. Acland (reprinted Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1993).

Ellis, C.D. 1971. "Cree verb paradigms." *International Journal of American Linguistics* 37: 76–95.

Okimâsis, Jean, and Solomon Ratt. 1999. *Cree, Language of the Plains* (textbook, workbook and tapes). Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center.

Wolvengrey, Arok. 1998. "On the Spelling and Pronunciation of First Nations Languages and Names in Saskatchewan." *Prairie Forum* 23, no. 1: 113–25.

– –. 2001. "Introduction to the Cree-English Entries." in *nêhiyawêwin: itwêwina/Cree: Words* (a Cree-English dictionary). Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center.

nêhiyâwiwin and Modernity

Neal McLeod

Since the time of the *ê-mâyikamikahk* ("Where it went wrong": the tragic events of 1885, commonly referred to in English as the Northwest Resistance) *nêhiyawak* (Cree-speaking peoples) have attempted to hold on to their collective memory (*nêhiyâwiwin*) despite colonial oppression. In reaction to the alienating effects of colonialism, *nêhiyawak* have confronted modernity and attempted to maintain traditions in the wake of massive changes in the world around them. All too often the struggle of Indigenous people to maintain their traditions has been perceived as reactionary and backward. However, I will argue that the attempt of *nêhiyawak* to maintain our identity provides a radical critique of modernity, some of the excesses of modernity which *nêhiyâwiwin* could correct.

Conflict of World Views

In many ways the conflict between Indigenous people and the modern world is the result of a collision of worldviews. Vine Deloria writes:

> A traditional Indian finds himself still experiencing the generalized presence of spiritual forces; at the same time he finds himself bound by the modern technology of communications and transportation which speeds his world far beyond its original boundaries (Deloria 1999: 122-23).

Modernity, loosely defined, is the worldview and "lived" social practice which uses science as the benchmark for truth manifested through technology. Instrumental rationality, the dominant philosophy of the technological society, sees the world as a set of entities which people attempt to control. A new communication system, a new discourse, emerges: instead of listening to the world, people try to dominate it. All beings, including Indigenous people, can be subjugated through this rationality.

Nimosôm, my grandfather, used to ask fundamental questions about contemporary life, such as "What have we given up in exchange for the modern life?" or "What stories have we forgotten in order to live in today's world?" In 1976 *nimosôm* wondered about the changes that had occurred during the last one hundred years for the Crees:

Neal McLeod is from the James Smith Cree First Nation in central Saskatchewan. He teaches Indian Studies at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College in Regina, and is also a painter and a poet.

> And we have wondered what our ancestors would say to us if they could be with us today. I, myself, often wonder about some of the things I have done in my lifetime. I have broken and worked down four hundred acres of land on James Smith. What would a man from 1876 or 1776 or even further back say to me, to all of us, if he were here today? (John R. McLeod 1975b: 2)

My grandfather reflected upon what it meant to be a modern Indian, and pondered the changes that had taken place. He added:

> Have we exchanged the buffalo for welfare payments? Have we traded our own religion for the white man's churches? Our medicine for his? Indian languages for English? (McLeod 1975b: 3)

Old people knew that there would be changes; they forecast what would happen in the future, and were told things by *âtayohkanak* (grandfather and grandmother spirits) concerning what would happen. Old people would use the phrase "*ê-pâstahat ayisiniw*" ("the transgressing people") to characterize those who were violating the earth and the creation.

Instead of listening to the world and engaging in a discourse of attunement, people began to try to dominate the rest of creation. The Old Ones spoke of how things would change. For example, they predicted that frogs would have six fingers instead of five. This has already begun to happen in polluted waters. The Old Ones, grounded in ancient tribal knowledge, knew that the price for playing God and trying to dominate the earth through technology could be disastrous.

At some level, it would appear that *nêhiyâwiwin* is opposed to modernity. Coming Day, a Cree from the Sweet Grass reserve, said: "The people of old were in a piteous state, when they first lived here on earth. The Higher Powers had put them down here with nothing at all" (Coming Day 1934: 3). Jimmy Chief echoed this, stating that "Long, long ago, when people were first put on this land, they were put here with nothing at all. No tools to work or hunt with" (Jimmy Chief 1973: 2). People struggled to live off the land through a disciplined, ceremonial life. Because of the reliance that people had upon the world and other beings in their everyday life, they had to listen to these other beings.

The themes of modernity, identity and legitimacy of interpretation dominate the relationship between the encounter of *nêhiyâwiwin* and modernity. The encounter with modernity for Cree-speaking people must be understood as a series of layers. One must understand the historical roots of modernity within European thought; and one must also understand the relationship of Cree culture with colonialism, and the way in which colonialism is synonymous with modernity. As well, modernity must be understood within the context of the rise of science and the use of new technologies: both of these, and the practice of colonialism itself, have forced *nêhiyawak* to reflect on the notion of progress and provide conclusive reasons to rethink a Hegelian, progressive model of history.

There is undoubtedly an interesting relationship between the universalistic impulses of modernity and the tribal forces of particularism. Some may see the universalistic tendencies of modernity as a liberating force upon human lives, believing that this element of modernity liberates people from the drudgery of tradition and that it affords people the luxury and opportunity to create themselves in possibilities. They may say that the process of modernity points to the contingency of any tradition and is perhaps a positive development.

Modernity Defined

In his recent and challenging commentary entitled "The Idea of Indigenous People," André Béteille questions the present discourse of "Indigenous" in the context of modernity. Béteille raises fundamental questions as to how people can maintain an Indigenous identity in the face of massive change to their lives. He asks: "How widely can people move and still retain the entitlement of being indigenous for themselves and their descendants?" (Béteille 1998: 190) He also challenges the term "Indigenous" and wants to limit its scope. His argument throughout the article justifies the colonization process and inadvertently questions the effort of Indigenous people trying to maintain a connection to their homeland. It does not follow, however, that because a nation state removes and alienates an Indigenous people from their land and disrupts their connection to it, that they are no longer Indigenous.

The rise of modernity and its corresponding narratives challenges in many ways traditional Cree narratives: with modernity, "narrative holes" emerge in Indigenous being. By this I mean that certain elements of Indigenous narratives can no longer explain the world. "Holes," or inconsistencies between the experiences of Indigenous people in the context of modernity and traditional Indigenous stories, emerge. The collision of modernity and Indigenous being could thus lead to a complete loss of collective Indigenous memory.

Modernity is essentially the privileging of scientific and technological explanations of the world; it is a particular way of conceiving our relationship with the world around us. All too often, in our case, there is a relationship between the development of this worldview and the way in which the Cree-speaking peoples were subordinated by the nation state in recent times. Much of the ethos of modernity can be characterized as a move towards individualism and a questioning of tradition. This poses many interesting conceptual problems for anybody considering the play between *nêhiyâwiwin* and modernity. For instance, is the questioning of tradition equivalent to assimilation? What are the differences, if any, between a Cree-speaking person's experience of modernity and that of an individual from the mainstream culture?

During the Enlightenment in western Europe, the rise of science and mathematics saw individuals gradually question the traditions that had surrounded them and had given them an interpretative location from which to make sense of the world. Undoubtedly in the case of Europe, this traditional narrative was Christianity. There arose a narrative difference between the older narrative and the new narrative. People tried in various ways to link these narratives, with greater or lesser degrees of success. One could see this in many walks of life, including organized religion, political systems, art, and literature. In some instances, this *narrative difference* began to create *conceptual holes*, and eventually people were no longer able to explain the world using the old paradigms and narratives. The French Revolution is perhaps one of the clearest examples of this narrative difference emerging at the time of Enlightenment, with the radical questioning of, among other things, the traditional role and power of the Church.

In many ways a similar process has occurred with Indigenous people in Canada. I will focus my comments on the Cree-speaking people. Their confrontation with modernity has occurred on many levels: (1) the absorption into a larger political unit (namely Canada); (2) the collapse of traditional economies (such as the buffalo economy in the west); (3) the imposition of a new religious

order (namely through the residential schools); (4) the decimation of traditional Cree political structures and leadership; and (5) the shift from traditional medicine to modern medicine. Many, if not all, of these issues are related.

Throughout the Enlightenment, the emerging of a powerful technology and science gave European society the wherewithal to dominate other cultures throughout the world; and one could not imagine the Industrial Revolution without the massive flow of goods from the "New World" to Europe. However, while the new narrative became dominant, Christian narratives still played an important role. As European powers expanded, they tended to justify their rule through appeals to God and to the proper cosmic order. Thus, within the context of colonialism, the crisis of interpretation that many European nations faced as they expanded was resolved throughout the world at the expense of Indigenous people.

The experience of *nêhiyawak* with modernity possesses at least two layers: there is the way in which modern technologies affect Indigenous cultures (which is not necessarily directly related to colonialism); and there is the way in which these technologies have been used by other powers to justify political domination and colonialism. Many writers and thinkers do not make this distinction, and this causes a great deal of conceptual confusion. Whereas if this distinction is made, there are different ways in which Indigenous people will question tradition. First, there will be a voluntary questioning of tradition. People, by drawing upon narratives and experiences from their modern life, may question traditional ways. It is certainly not the case that everything in a tradition must remain the same forever; therefore, Indigenous people in modern times may begin to question certain traditional practices. Second, there will be an involuntary questioning of tradition caused by colonization: because of the imposition of a new order brought about by a colonial power, Indigenous people may develop a false sense of consciousness regarding their traditions, and begin to question them simply because all of their institutions have been colonized. Thus, the difference between traditions and modern reality can be imposed, as opposed to freely constructed (as in the first case).

In both cases, there exists a "thinking outside" of the traditional interpretative framework. I would argue that this is a natural process, to the extent that cultures are organic and therefore always changing. The difference between the first and the second kinds of change is that one is forced while the other seems to be accepted. However, both instances involve the need for creative negotiation between tradition and new experiences.

Cree Dwelling in the Land

One of the challenging issues for *nêhiyawak* people today is the need to rethink our place in the world, to think beyond the ways in which the mainstream society has dominated us. The way in which *nêhiyawak* have dwelled in the land is the foundation for Cree narrative consciousness; the source of this consciousness comes from dreams which tap into the powers of the spirit world. Spatially, Indigenous people remain attached to an area of land over an extended period of time; this connection is manifested through such things as knowledge of plants, sacred sites, and songs. Indigenous people remain attached to specific pieces of land: this fact manifests itself through songs, ceremonies, and language. Location within a specific landscape gives power to Indigenous consciousness and reality.

A long time ago, *nêhiyawak* people speculated on the impending transformation of the world. Charlie Chief remembers his father speaking to another man as they were seated on top of a hill looking at a settler's cabin:

> You know something ... it will not be many years before this land of ours will be fenced and cross-fenced. The trees will be pulled out and the land broken up (Charlie Chief 1974: 22).

And he went on:

> The old men looked depressed as they sat there smoking their pipes. They were being deprived of a way of life. In later years I saw what they said would happen. The land was broken up and we had dust storms. Fences were everywhere and the animals left or died off (ibid., 1974: 23).

Perhaps one of the most important elements of being Indigenous is that a specific group dwells in a specific area for a long period of time: thus the narratives of a people are tied to a specific area. Indeed the collective memory of a people becomes layered through narrative memory, as the memories of older generations engage in a hermeneutical interplay with the narratives and experiences of the present generation.

Vine Deloria, Jr. discusses the importance of the land in framing Indigenous consciousness, stating that "Tribal religions are actually complexes of attitudes, beliefs, and practices fine-tuned to harmonize with the lands on which the people live" (Deloria 1994: 70). Thus, the landscape shapes and molds the way in which the people understand the world. Deloria adds: "The most notable characteristic of the tribal traditions is the precision and specificity of the traditions when linked to the landscape, a precision lacking in most other religious traditions" (ibid., 122).

Willie Ermine's concept of *mahmâtawisiwin* ("tapping into the mystery") is also important in articulating a Cree concept of land, and one version of an Indigenous conception of dwelling in a specific landscape for a long period of time (Ermine 1995). It also denotes how *nêhiyawak* are able to tap into the powers around them, as well as a fundamental a way of understanding things – of articulating one's place in the world.

One of the ways in which Crees did this was through *mistapêw* (the Great Man). Frank Speck, discussing the closely related Naskapi group, describes the *mistapêw* in the following way:

> the active state of the soul is one means of guidance through life which provides the means of overcoming the spirits of animals in the life-long search for food (Speck 1977: 33).

He adds that this being is revealed through dreams (ibid: 35), and describes the connection animals make with people during the hunt, in which "the willingness of the beasts to submit to the weapons and the permission of their deific 'owner' are of utmost importance" (ibid., 80).

Like Speck, Deloria comments on the importance of Indigenous ceremonies in the transmission of Indigenous culture and in preserving identity:

> They help to instill a sense of social cohesion in the people and remind them of the passage of the generations that have brought them to the present. A society that cannot remember its past and honour it is in peril of losing its soul (Deloria 1999: 207).

One of the most important ways in which *nêhiyâwiwin* has been transformed

is in the manner people communicate with each other and with the rest of Creation. The key for us to surviving as Indigenous people in our conflict with modernity lies in our cultural strength. Ernest Tootoosis (known as *kâ-miywasihk*), a Cree from Poundmaker reserve, noted:

> It is important again that native people go back to the original way of praying to the creator ... for thousands of years we survived and the very core of this survival as I understand is our communication system with the Creator (Tootoosis 1975).

Deloria also stresses the importance of people maintaining communication with other beings:

> The important aspect of Indian tribal religions ... has been their insistence on developing and maintaining a constant relationship with the spiritual forces that govern the lives of humans (Deloria 1999: 122).

When people lived off the land, there were ceremonies which linked them to this land; people humbled themselves in the presence of other beings which gave them life. Edward Fox, from the Sweet Grass reserve, spoke of the relationship between food and health that existed a long time ago:

> Elders had little sicknesses. People say this was because of the food they ate. The hunters would go out and kill the buffalo, then immediately slit the throat of the animal and drain blood from it. This was what gave a person life. The frozen food we buy today cannot do this. When an animal is killed in the hunt, some life within it is passed on to us, to help us live (Fox 1978).

The food that we eat today is very different from the food that we ate a long time ago. Because we get our food from supermarkets, we have lost most of the elements of our ceremonies and our communication system with the rest of creation.

Modernity has transformed our way of dwelling in the world; it has transformed our physicality. My Uncle Burton Vandall told me that one day at a sun dance, there were a large number of people gathered and it was time for people to speak. One person got up and lamented the fact that young people no longer seemed to listen to anyone. The people, the old man said, were no longer respectful to each other, and the community was falling apart. Then another man got up and said, "It is no wonder that the young people have no respect. You feed them the milk from a cow, and you feed them the meat of animals that you have confined." These stories speak of the consequences of losing the old source of food, which in turn means a transformation in the way we communicate with the universe.

There are other examples of traditional taboos regarding the use of certain forms of food. Speck notes of the Naskapi, close relatives of the Cree in eastern Canada:

> The taboo at Lake St. John against non-indigenous food does not stop with deer... And when it comes to mutton and chicken, beef and pork, the feeling is even more intense. Nevertheless, the changing conditions of the time force them to eat pork and beef. They ... attribute their bodily ills, even the decline of their race, to the eating of domestic animals. The use of salt also is avoided in preparing pure wild meat (Speck 1977: 78).

Sarah Jane Asapace, from the Piapot reserve, comments:

> We used to hunt rabbits, muskrats, gophers and other wild animals to eat. All these animals are clean; they eat grass, bark, and roots. Today, everything we buy to eat is polluted. That's why people were healthy in those days and are always sick now (Asapace 1978).

Ironically, the word for *Canada* in Cree is *kâ-kânâtâ-askiy* "the clean land." I remember my uncle, a moose hunter, lamenting the destruction of the land: "Today the land is not as clean as it once was," he used to say. Unfortunately, Indigenous people have often very few means of stopping the exploitation of their land.

As an extension of the communication system, there is also the question of the change in food production. My great-grandfather *wîhcikos*, who died in 1914, was from the Bush country. He used a bow and arrow to hunt, as he refused to use a gun. He had dream helpers, *pawâkanak*, who told him where the game was. In our age of reliance on technology, we have forgotten many things. My uncle Burton told me that *wîhcikos* was able to talk to animals: he would call out to them and they would come.

An interesting story regarding the power of the pipestem has been passed on in my family. The pipestem was significant for the Cree, Dene and other nations of Indigenous people as a way of concluding arrangements. In fact, one could argue that it was a quintessential element of Indigenous political protocol in large parts of Canada. The pipestem was more than merely a way of sealing political arrangements and treaties: it was also a way of making and affirming relationships with the land around people, of honouring the spiritual powers (*âtayohkanak*) who dwelt in the area of the land where the people were making their living.

My father told me the following story in this regard:

> One time my father was visiting my great-grandfather on a windy day. My great-grandfather then told my father the following story. One time my great-grandfather was in the house of wihtikokân. It was an older house, and they were using a grease lamp for light. The wind crashed against the house, and moved through the cracks of house and the light of the grease lamp was almost extinguished. The house was rocking, and was moving about vigorously. My great-grandfather told my father it was the only time he saw wihtikôkân get scared. wîhtikôkân was worried, because if he lost his house in the storm, he would be without shelter and in a difficult position. He took his pipestem, and pointed it in various directions and prayed to the various beings, including the wind spirit. He prayed that the wind would stop, and it did (Jerry McLeod 2000).

wihtikôhkân offered the smoke from the pipe to the wind, and was able to mediate the power of the spirit emanating from the wind. This narrative demonstrates the manner in which the pipestem could be used to mediate with the powers of the surrounding landscape.

People were thankful to all of the helpers and *âtayohkanak* (spirit beings). Within Cree culture, the fundamental way of communicating was through dreams and *âtayohkanak*. Fine Day, a Cree from Sweet Grass reserve, noted:

> No man knows all the âtayohkanak. But in the beginning they were all shown. Manito himself never comes to a man in a dream. But the âtayohkanak are his servants and it is He who tells the âtayohkanak which children to visit (Fine Day 1934: 4).

One of the ways of channelling these beings was through bundles. As Fine Day explained, "The bundle given to you will be spiritually powerful always and its strength will never die, because the animals and the *âtayôhkanak* will always be alive" (Fine Day 1934: 8). Another way in which they acquired this knowledge was through the use of shaking tents (*kôsapahtapicikan*): people would gather in the shaking tent, where, as Tanner notes, "attention is concentrated on discovering information about distant band members, finding lost objects, and generally amusing the onlooking" (Tanner 1979: 112).

It is interesting that some people use the images of modern technology to describe the ways in which Indigenous people dwell in the world. For instance, Norval Morrisseau uses the image of a computer (Morrisseau 1997) for this purpose. It should be noted that in contemporary Cree usage the term *mâmahtawisiâpacihcikan*, which is used to characterize a computer, literally means "machine which taps into the mystery of life."

Norval Morrisseau adds to the discussion of the importance of dreams through his concept of the "House of Invention" (ibid., 13). This "House of Invention" stands outside of time and space, and is accessible only through art and dreams. Morrisseau notes of his paintings:

> They don't represent any story at all. They remind the viewer of the same experience that these Indian people, our ancestors, had in the dream world. Reminding the viewer that he too can go there in his dream state (Morrisseau 1997: 22).

Robert Brightman cites Michel Dumas describing the power that comes from land-dreaming:

> People used to sleep in the water. You wouldn't believe it. They make a coffin. In the wintertime, they put them ... like first freeze-up early bogs... About March, about this time of year, they go and take this guy out. They stay there in the water and winter ... he's dreaming all the bottom of the water. He's dreaming all the animals, they gotta come to him (Brightman 1993: 81).

The world of the "House of Invention" can never be completely described, nor can one person exhaust all of its possibilities. Morrisseau says: "My grandfather told me once that nobody, no matter how hard they tried, could remember all of the legends; otherwise the whole of northwestern Ontario would be covered in pictographs" (ibid: 15). Thus, the artist, like the storyteller, is a participant in the perpetuation of collective memory.

The belief in *mêmêkwêsiwak* also demonstrates the Cree concept of "dwelling in the land." The information following is derived from a variety of story-tellers whom I have heard throughout my lifetime. Reminiscent of the "Fairy People" of Ireland, the *mêmêkwêsiwak* are small beings, from two to three feet tall; they are usually found close to water, or in some cases in the proximity of pine trees. The water or pine tree functions as a gateway to the *mêmêkwêsiwak*, who come to people through dreams and tell them where they should go. The person who is dreaming then goes to that location, enters the realm of the *mêmêkwêsiwak*, and presents cloth, tobacco and hide as an offering to the *mêmêkwêsiwak*. The latter then present the dreamer with medicines that are used to heal. There are stories from my reserve which speak of the *mêmêkwêsiwak* as having in their water homes sand sculptures of human bodies, from which they fashion medicines.

In a 1976 interview, two elders from James Smith, Josie Whitehead and his

wife, were asked if *mêmêkwêsiwak* ever died. They did not know the answer (Whitehead 1976). However, my uncle Burton Vandall told me a story wherein his grandfather, Pacinis Vandall (Patrick Vandall), had found what appeared to be a dead *mêmêkwêsiw* once when he was surveying in the north. He brought the *mêmêkwêsiw* back to camp, whereupon an old man told him to return the body where he had found it. The experience evidently left a deep impression upon him, and he talked about this for the rest of his days.

It is interesting to note that when the forces of colonialism come to exert their full weight, people talk about the *mêmêkwêsiwak* retreating from the area (in the same way that the buffalo and *âtayohkanak* retreated). An example of this is the Qu'Appelle River Valley. People speak of the way in which after the flooding of the valley the *mêmêkwêsiwak*, who had played their water drums, could no longer be heard. Robert Brightman also documents the retreat of *mêmêkwêsiwak* in areas of northern Manitoba (Brightman 1989).

Challenges of Modernity: Creating Modern Institutions

The central challenge for *nêhiyawak* in the climate of modernity is to create, in the wake of colonialism, modern institutions which draw upon traditional beliefs. John B. Tootoosis, perhaps the most vigorous champion of Indian rights in the twentieth century, has noted the way in which the Church tried to cripple Indigenous consciousness:

> The Church discouraged Indians from joining the organization [the League of Indians of Western Canada]. The nuns would lecture the Indians. They would tell the children everyday that if they listened to their parents they would go to hell. After many years of this the young children didn't listen to their parents. They were brainwashed. They created a conflict inside every teepee on the reservation. The church cut off the very people [the elders] who should have been teaching and preaching and guiding the young people (Tootoosis 1977).

Attempts were made by various political organizations to stop these residential schools. One of the stated goals of the Allied Bands (later to become the Protective Association for the Indians and their Treaties) in the north of Regina was to put an end to those schools. The organization sought "to strive for a better Indian education with schools on every reserve in order to bring Indians a better standard of socio-economic development" (Federation of Saskatchewan Indians 1980: VI-26). The League of Indians of Western Canada was also against the schools: "The League opposed residential schools – the church wanted to dominate the people through the schools" (Tootoosis 1977).

The resistance of various leaders made the creation of modern institutions possible. One of the important aspects of *nêhiyâwiwin* and modernity is indeed the vibrant resistance that *nêhiyawak* opposed to the process of colonialism. Once *nêhiywak* people had began to get control over their lives, the challenge became how to create new institutions.

The persistence of Cree narrative memory demonstrates the resistance of Cree-speaking peoples in an effort to hold on to their identity despite experiencing the brutalities of English/Canadian colonialism. People tell stories not only to remember, but also to hope. The narrative memory of Cree-speaking people is also involved in a process of preserving a place in the world – a way of understanding reality. While the pressures of colonialism can crush the collective spir-

it of a people, it can also solidify resistance and allow people to conceive of an alternative mode of being.

Perhaps one of the most interesting developments in recent times is the use of education to preserve culture. Instead of destroying culture (as in the case of residential schools), education today has the capacity to strengthen it. Also, education has the capacity to allow people to think outside of the interpretative framework of modernity.

One of the ways in which Indian people in Saskatchewan began to get control over their lives was through education. This manifested itself first through the creation of various school committees, which initially had the following tasks: encourage good attendance, monitor that attendance, and make suggestions for transportation and janitorial assistance. Initially, the school committees had little influence over substantive matters, and "vital areas such as curriculum development, teacher training, and school administration remained under the control of other agencies" (Hodgson n.d.: 4). James Burns, of the James Smith reserve, noted that the school committee of James Smith spent "most of its time ... trying to settle arguments and grievances with the Kinistino school" (Northian 1974: 29).

Things began to change as Indian people asserted their right to control their own educational institutions. Smith Atimoyoo, the first director of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College, stressed the importance of knowing who we are: "It is very important that we, as Indian people, realize that we must *learn to know who we are and what we should be doing*" (School Committee Conference 1969: 4).

People saw education as a way of gaining this control:

> We have to realize that we must take part in planning and in carrying out those plans if we are ever to regain our proper place in the social life of our country. We can no longer be content to let others do our thinking for us. We, ourselves, must take the action which will remove the discrepancies which have existed in education for Indians in the past (Blue Quills Native Education Council 1970).

This statement was made by the people of the Saddle Lake reserve with the advent of self-government through education. The Cree people of this community were attempting to take control of their lives in a tangible way through education.

Over the last thirty years, much of the idealism of the cultural renaissance of the *nêhiyawak* has been lost. Chiefs, instead of sharing their wealth, seem to be more interested in golf, cellular phones, and casinos. The Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College, for instance, has become a bureaucracy and has lost much of its spirit and its taste for pioneering work. There are no longer elder workshops. Many groups in our age seem to be more interested in the money than in the preservation of collective memory.

The relative speed with which Indigenous governments have adopted characteristics of "modern governments" demonstrates that modernity is more than a cultural phenomenon specific to Europeans: rather, it seems to be related to a mode of production. In this respect a cousin of mine told me the following story. She was interpreting for an assembly of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians. The elders spoke at the beginning, but then the bureaucrats began to speak using a different language (they did so in two ways: they spoke English and also used bureaucratic jargon). Instead of relying on the power of *mosômipanawak* (ancestors), they drew upon the power of flow charts and fiscal breakdowns...

By the end of the 1970s, *nêhiyawak* in Saskatchewan were struggling to create their own modern institutions but, at the same time, they were in many ways simply replicating the modern institutions of mainstream society. Perhaps what was missing was the philosophy of *nêhiyawak*. Instead, modern bureaucracies were created without substantial attention to older ways of doing things.

During a meeting at the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College in 1979, my grandfather, John R. McLeod, questioned the centralization of power within the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians. My grandfather, who taught me most of what of I know directly or through my father, said: "It seems to me that this is a one-man organization and this one man is the chief of this organization" (Co-ordinators Meeting: 6). The chief, instead of being accountable to the people, is then answerable only to himself. *nimosôm* (my grandfather) added:

> He decides everything when he likes. As for the other members of the executive, it appears to me that they are just followers and the Chief says, that is what happens and that is how these deficits occur and we have no say (ibid.).

The challenge of an enlightened modernity is to create modern institutions but, at the same time, to maintain key elements of traditional Cree philosophy. If this is not done, then modernity seems to be simply a vehicle for assimilation: rather than using the tools of technology for the development and expansion of Indian institutions, the technology and new modes of production have led to assimilation of Indigenous consciousness.

Undoubtedly, the challenges of creating modern institutions such as schools create enormous logistical problems: it is therefore not surprising that difficulties should emerge. Indian people had for too long been living under the domination of the Indian Act, and had not administered their own affairs in a culturally meaningful manner for generations. One can see some parallels with what is currently happening in eastern Europe: as various nations try to create modern democratic institutions such as government and schools after a long period of domination by the Soviet Union, mismanagement inevitably ensues for an unknown period of time.

The struggle was long and difficult throughout the 1920s and until the late 1960s. The only source of funding that Indian leaders had was through collections that various people in communities would organize for them. During that time, however, while the leaders had very little money they were highly motivated and were directly accountable to the people they were supposed to serve.

The 1972 National Indian Brotherhood position paper stressed the importance of children learning about their past, thus linking history, education and self-government:

> Unless a child learns about the forces which shape him: the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being. The Indian child who learns about his heritage will be proud of it. The lessons he learns in school reinforce and contribute to the image he has of himself as an Indian (Indian Control of Indian Education 1972: 9).

In order to achieve this, there was a need for a new curriculum. It was only through the development of a new curriculum that education could be used to revive culture, as opposed to being the tool for assimilation that it had been in the past:

> The present school system is culturally alien to native students. Where the Indian contribution is not entirely ignored, it is often cast in unfavourable light. School curricula in federal and provincial schools should recognize Indian culture, values, customs, languages and the Indian contribution to Canadian development (ibid.).

In Saskatchewan, attempts were made to develop curricula that would help foster the retention of Aboriginal languages. The Cree Language Committee attempted to implement a meaningful curriculum into the schools. Language was stressed because it was seen as a valuable source of cultural preservation:

> We also feel that learning Cree is important for our children. Their ability to appreciate the history and mode of living of their people depends considerably on their knowledge of our language (SICC 1973: 8).

Thus, there was a growing realization of the importance of the relationship between history and education. If Indians were to survive as a distinct people, they would need languages and historical knowledge.

A concrete instance where *nêhiyawak* attempted to get control over their institutions was in 1973 on my reserve, the James Smith Reserve, in east central Saskatchewan. It was called the "louse incident." Children who were bussed into the nearby town of Kinistino for their schooling were wrongfully accused of having lice. The incident was quite painful for the children and energized the people of James Smith to create their own school. A news report of the time described the "louse incident" as the "final straw that capped a growing disenchantment by both parents and the white man's school" (Northian 1974: 26). The school at Kinistino had been receiving funding from the Federal government, but as Dyck and McLeod write, "over a period of fifteen years the schools were unable and perhaps even unwilling to meet the needs of the students from James Smith, even though they received large amounts of money in tuition and capital agreements" (Dyck and McLeod 1973: 1).

The creation of an Indian-controlled school on the reserve was the first step towards self-government as people acquired concrete control over their lives. By getting control over schools, people could try to reverse colonialism and to establish Indigenous institutions founded upon Indigenous philosophy. The control of education was the first manifestation of self-government because education is such a concrete aspect of people's lives. It was the area which many of the early organizers such as John Tootoosis had struggled to effect a change.

Robert Regnier, a former employee of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre, shared the following story with me concerning the "louse incident." The events had reached a climax and there was a meeting to which representatives of Indian Affairs came. Before that meeting, the school committee had met and created stereotypes of different officials from Indian Affairs. There was the "know it all," for example: the school committee created hypothetical questions that these people would have to answer. They practiced how they would respond to a question with "You will not be able to do this: you can't take over the school." Eventually, however, my community acquired control over our school and began to develop programs: language lessons were created, and some wanted to use land claims research to develop histories. John Tobias commented that the information could be made to become part of a "social studies program" (Tobias 1973: 2).

The move of the James Smith reserve to establish control over their school was the first one in Saskatchewan, although it would prove to be typical of other

reserves. A document of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College describes the attempt to write their own curricula; it speaks of the Joint School system, which "up to this time has in large part been a failure for Indian children" (SICC 1975: 1). The document attributes this failure to a "conflict of values" (ibid.).

Two years after my reserve achieved control over schooling, my grandfather was asked to be the chairperson of the centennial commemorations of Treaty Six. At a meeting in 1975, the minutes note: "Mr. McLeod expresses his happiness every time a new school is opened on a reserve but he wishes to see more of the Indian image projected from these schools" (John R. McLeod 1975: 14). He himself was a survivor of the residential schools and struggled through that experience, which included the process of trying to rob him of his identity, his self-image, his Cree-ness. *nimosôm* added:

> We should realize that it is up to us to teach our children their history and make them proud to be Indians. There is a quote which reads: 'The public school is a state institution created by the state for its own preservation.' ... every reserve is a state and so should we Indians rely on our own people to preserve our own culture by teaching our children (John R. McLeod 1975: 14).

By articulating Cree history and culture in the schools, *nêhiyawak* would be able to achieve self-government because we would know who we are as a people. In a meeting the following month, *nimosôm* stated that "[t]he reserve is also an institution, an Indian institution where children can be taught their Indian history and language and to be proud that they are Indians" (McLeod 1976: 6).

As my father Jeremiah McLeod has often noted, there were innumerable problems in putting the dream of Indian control of education into practice. Despite the idealism, there were difficulties regarding funding. For instance, an audit of the Band stated: "Extremely weak, almost non-existent internal control" (James Smith Band Audit 1973-1974: 4). The report goes on to argue that "It should be obvious that the only logical solution to the problems of James Smith Band is a complete withdrawal of programs" (James Smith Band Audit 1973-1974: 4).

Technology and Modern Cree Structures

I have tried to briefly outline the ways in which Cree culture has been affected by modern life and in which Cree people have struggled to maintain their identities in the face of massive change. Beginning in the early 1970s, when *nêhiyawak* began to acquire control of our own institutions, elders were always conscious of trying to pass on traditional values to a new generation. The late Smith Atimoyoo noted that the elder had in the back of his mind "to have something to pass on so that when his children's time came they would have something meaningful ... something that they would be proud to carry on..." (Atimoyoo 1975). *nimosôm*, himself one of the founders of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College, spoke of it as being the place where the finest Indian thinking should occur. However, there remain many challenges to achieving this goal in our modern climate.

Historically, people have always tried to make sense of changes in the world around them and, in turn, they try to weave these new realities into their traditional narratives. For instance, my uncle Burton Vandall noted that when he was young, he heard people speak of the radio as *mistokowât kâ-pîkiskwêt* (the box which talks): *nêhiyawak* were extending an old concept of a box, and the idea of

speaking, to a new object within their field of experience. Charlie Burns, from my reserve, once referred to shaking tents as "old Indian television," as it allowed people to see things from a great distance.

While *nêhiyawak* may be able to absorb the idea of new technologies, the question remains whether we can successfully absorb these technologies into the lifeblood of our culture. Can we do it in such a way that we maintain ties to our traditional past, while at the same time navigating successfully through our contemporary circumstances?

Marshall McLuhan has an interesting stance regarding modern technology. On the one hand he sees technology and mass communication as offering a new utopian reality for humanity; but at the same time he holds that technology determines human communication and indeed human reality. Arthur Kroker considers McLuhan "the leading exemplar of the perspective of technological humanism," and speaks of him as representing the "'utopian' possibilities of technology" (Kroker 1984: 15). Marshall McLuhan throughout his writings stresses the idea that "the medium is the message," that is that the means of mass communication inform the message itself. He seems to stress the liberating powers of technology and its potential for amplifying the possibilities of man. McLuhan is also famous for his notion of the "global village." He saw the new age of mass electronic communication as bringing people together throughout the world. Tacit in his writings is the notion that modernity, as manifested through modern technology and communication, also allows for a new cosmopolitanism: that of linking various narratives together. On this score, McLuhan seems to be advocating a new sense of universalism, which essentially eliminates the particular elements of any specific culture. Indeed, the whole notion that "the medium is the message" would seem to undermine Cree self-determination and collective memory. As well, the notion of "global village" has the capacity to be equated with hegemony, which in our age would probably be that of the English-speaking American culture, with which the mainstream culture of Canada is closely connected.

Unlike McLuhan, Vine Deloria does not see great outcomes for global communication:

> The world ... is not a global village so much as a series of nonhomogenous pockets of identity that must eventually come into conflict because they represent different historical arrangements of emotional energy (Deloria 1994: 64).

Thus, Deloria sees one of the aspects of modernity as being a collision of ideas and of different ways of seeing the world. For Deloria, the modern conversation across cultures is not simply a sharing, but is often a continuation of colonialism as well as the resistance to it.

Craig Howe, in "Cyberspace is no Place for Tribalism," also raises skeptical points regarding the creation of technology and the ways in which this technology interfaces with tribal ways of knowing, believing that this amounts to "creating a global village in cyberspace where connections to particular landscapes are irrelevant" (Howe 1997: 20). In many ways, the advent of technology in mass communication uproots Cree tribalism: instead of people being grounded in the narratives of Cree elders, young people today are being bombarded by the English-speaking culture as expressed in mass communication such as television and modern forms of educational structures (where children are exposed to English throughout the day). Also, one of the structures of modernity tends to be

the stress on individualism (ironically grounded, again, in the English-speaking culture) which accompanies a steady move away from traditional narrative memory.

The Internet is one manifestation of this process. Craig Howe laments the individualism of cyberspace: "In cyberspace ... anonymous individuals reign supreme" (Howe 1998: 23). He thinks that digital technology "would further atomize individuals, isolating them from other individuals and from their surrounding environments" (ibid., 24). Savard describes this as techno-pessimism, asserting that "[t]echnology leads to the loss of social fabric," so that "[h]umans are disembodied from society" (Savard 1998: 90).

Gail Valaskaki also notes the negative aspects of communication. One of the elements of her analysis links the growth of the Internet with a shift in power (as cited in Howe 1997: 86). She thinks that one of the dangerous elements of modern technology is that it introduces new ideas which bring about changes to Indigenous traditions (this relates to my notion of involuntary change of traditions brought about by colonialism). This technology allows and facilitates alternative ways of seeing the world: "non-Natives introduced a pluralism into Inuit society, leading to the disappearance of traditional power structures in favour of European-inspired structures" (as cited in Howe 1998: 86). Pluralism, within this context, could be understood as the emergence of a new discourse, namely that which arises out of the mainstream English-speaking culture as it is disseminated through mass communication. To use the terminology from before, *narrative difference* emerges: between traditional Cree narratives and those of the dominant English-speaking society.

Howe points to one of the central problematics of modernity for Indigenous people: the tension between trying to preserve a particular identity and participating within a larger universal, cosmopolitan discourse. As mentioned earlier, modernity and technology disrupt people's attachment to traditions in the wake of social change. Howe holds that the relationship to specific places on the landscape changes with the advent of cyberspace: "Identity and land are inseparable within tribalism, yet the locating of identity in particular geographical places is impossible in cyberspace" (Howe 1997: 22). One could interpret this disruption of Indigenous space in both physical and conceptual terms.

While Howe raises many important points, he is perhaps too skeptical regarding the nature of the Internet: there are undoubtedly some redeeming aspects. In many ways, the Internet does duplicate some of the aspects of traditional Cree narrative memory, such as open-endedness. People are free to choose their own pathways and create their own links – this replicates the process of Cree narrative memory wherein listeners to traditional narratives merge their own experiences within the traditional narratives, thereby creating their own discursive pathways.

Undoubtedly, though, the Internet and television pose threats to the survival of *nêhiyawiwin*: they have supplanted traditional narrative memory. As mentioned before, instead of listening to tribal elders, children will watch television and be heavily influenced by mainstream English-speaking culture. However, the Internet and digital technology do have the potential to help liberate Cree consciousness from the grip of colonialism: Cree groups can use digital technology to preserve the words of old people, and indeed for various classroom purposes. Through the use of Cree narrative imagination, the constraints of technology and

modernity can be eased to some extent, and the positive aspect of modern life can be engaged.

Cree Narrative Imagination

It is obvious that there are many aspects of modern life which threaten to disrupt traditional Cree narrative memory: shifts in lifestyle; absorption into the nation state of Canada; changes in educational and teaching structures; and of course the transformation of traditional Cree political structures as exposed earlier in this essay.

While there are some important differences between the ways in which modernity has been experienced by Indigenous peoples, such as the Crees, and by European nations, there are important similarities. Heidegger offers insights into the way in which modernity has transformed human consciousness. Throughout his writings, he warned against the dangers of modern technology, thinking that it had the potential to completely overwhelm humanity: initially technology helped humans through its utility, but within this interpretative horizon humans themselves would eventually become tools. In other words, the essence of humanity would be utterly transformed through the instrumental nature of modern technology.

Heidegger (1977) uses the German term Gestell ["framing"] to describe this process. He feels that modernity, as manifested through technology, has "framed" human life in a specific way: the whole world is conceived of as simply a set of objects to manipulate through instrumental rationality. One can see how Heidegger in this later work is radicalizing his earlier conception of *Seinvergessenheit* ["the forgetfulness of Being"] as articulated in *Sein und Zeit* (Heidegger 1967/1929): the "framing" of reality offered by modern technology causes us to forget various aspects of reality (*Sein*). Essentially, Heidegger advocates a "thinking outside" of the interpretative horizon of modernity: he urges a more holistic way of conceiving our place in the world.

As we have seen, one of the central tasks of Cree thinking today is to try to conceive of ways of "thinking outside" of the rubric of colonialism and of some aspects of modernity: there are thus many similarities between this project and the position of Heidegger. Many people have attempted to articulate Indigenous models of theory. We might want to conceive of theory as a philosophical activity of reflective consciousness as well as an activity of thinking outside a state of affairs in the world. One could argue that the project of Cree philosophy to think beyond the colonial barriers is indeed a theoretical activity. Some may say that "theory" is an inherently western idea and cannot be rendered within Indigenous philosophies; others that there is no need for a discussion of an Indigenous theory or an Indigenous philosophy. It might be said that the laws and mechanics of intellectual patterns are universal, and that there is no need to articulate a culturally specific location of these phenomena.

I argue that there is a need for a mix of the above positions so that understanding is possible across cultures and eras. At the same time, I would argue that specific conceptions of human understanding emerge in specific cultures. However, I am not saying that history is simply a sharing of cultures and ideas through time; rather, sometimes the historical narratives of one group can question and challenge the narratives and colonizing practices of another group. This is certainly the case of Indigenous people. But this implies that understanding is

possible across cultures only as long as people can understand and be aware of another group's institutions, stories, and practices.

Cree narrative imagination is a visionary process of imagining another state of affairs. This does not imply that one is seeking Utopia, but rather simply a different possibility: a conception of a different way in which people might live together. *mistahi maskwa*, also known as *kâ-kî-itiht* ("the one called") or Big Bear in English, was certainly an example of this. He struggled to maintain Cree independence against overwhelming odds. I consider the late John Tootoosis to be another example of Cree narrative imagination. He imagined a condition, a possibility wherein Indian people would not be dominated by the Indian Act and by a system that was designed to destroy Cree identity and political institutions. I also consider in this manner the work of my late *nôhkomipan*, my grandmother Ida McLeod, who along with Helen Tootoosis founded the Saskatchewan Indian Language Institute. Despite the pressures of modern life and mass communication, they struggled to preserve the Cree language. After the death of *nôhkom*, Freda Ahenakew continued the work and has left us a rich legacy of materials.

Cree narrative imagination involves a high degree of self-awareness. It seems to me that this is essentially the nature of theory: a self-consciousness of practices and social realities, as well as the attempt to think beyond these constructions. Some of these social realities will be from within the culture itself, while others will be imposed manifestations of colonialism. The challenge is that there is no really clear line between these two elements of social practice. As alluded to earlier, the rethinking of traditional ways might in itself be conceived of as assimilation.

An example of this would certainly be the case of William Wuttunee, who in 1969 was hired by the federal government to advocate the White Paper. His critique of traditional life is more an example of wished-for assimilation than a radical rethinking of colonial realities, or even a radical rethinking of Cree traditions which might lead to a better life for *nêhiyawak*. William Wuttunee supported the White Paper and was consequently banned from speaking on his reserve. He was very critical of Indian "tradition" as expressive of a prevailing "treaty mentality" (Wuttunnee 1971: 60), and wrote that "Indians have built up the treaties to such an extent that nearly everything in their lives hinges upon them" (ibid., 108). He adds:

> So long as the treaties are held in solemn reverence and so long as Indians continue to lick their wounds in the memories of the past, Canada will have the problem of a people unable to stand on their feet in a new society. The signing of the Treaties hastened the crumblings of an old culture which had seen its day (Wuttunee 1971: 103).

He also relies completely on the perspectives of the mainstream society when he makes the following remark: "The claim that Indians were independent nations has never been recognized by the courts anywhere" (ibid., 101).

Wuttunee disparages those who may feel attachment to their community after they leave the reserve:

> In fact, when they leave the reserve they are taking the first step to complete freedom... If they can leave the reserve and remove from their hearts once and for all the last vestiges of any misplaced feelings of loyalty, they will then be happy in their new surroundings (ibid., 115).

I think that people were justified to ban Wuttunee from speaking on various reserves. While traditions do change over time, efforts must focus on curtailing the destruction of communities.

One important point to consider is the relationship between tradition and post-modern consciousness – a thinking beyond the narratives' limitations of time and place. Post-modernism essentially questions the activity of tradition. In many ways, the Indigenous Trickster is paradigmatic of the action involved in this process. The Trickster radically questions the world around us and the ways in which we make sense of it. There is a self-consciousness and critical engagement with the Trickster narratives and practices; or to put it another way, there is a critical engagement with the Trickster's "lived" narrative embodiments.

There exists an irony in Cree narrative imagination. On the one hand it is grounded in tradition, but at the same time it is a *critique* of tradition. It is also spatial, but at the same time dislocated in space (which typifies how Indigenous people have encountered modernity).

However, there are certainly limits to this comparison between post-modern and Indigenous narratives. While post-modernism seeks to liberate one from "tradition" as a lived practice, it also has the potential to lead to nihilism. It is a critique of negation which offers nothing to fill the narrative void. On the other hand, I would argue that while Cree narrative imagination is an exercise to think beyond the limits of colonialism, it is also often grounded in traditional experiences and in interpretations arrived at in light of these experiences.

References

Asapace, Sarah. 1978. *Enewuk* (Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College).

Atimoyoo, Smith. 1975. "The Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College" (black and white film, 30 Minutes). Sasktoon: Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, 1975.

Béteille, Andre (1998). "The Idea of Indigenous People," *Current Anthropology* 39, no. 2 (1998): 187–91.

Blue Quills Native Education Council. 1970. Untitled document from the private papers of John R. McLeod.

Brightman, Robert. 1989. *âcathôhkîwina and âcimôwina*. Ottawa: National Museum of Civlization.

Chief, Charlie. IH-029/30. Indian History Film Project. Source: Saskatchewan Archives Board. Interview Location: Seekaskootch Reserve. Interviewer/Interpreter: Alphonse Littlepoplar. Interview Date: July 11, 1974.

Chief, Jimmy. IH-026. Indian History Film Project. Source: Saskatchewan Archives Board. Interview Location: Seekaskootch Reserve. Interviewer: Mary Mountain. Interpreter: Alphonse Littlepoplar. Interview Date: July 23, 1973.

Coming Day. 1934. "Sweetgrass Defeats the Blackfoot and Sarci." In Leonard Bloomfield (comp.), *Plains Cree Texts*. New York: G.E. Stechert and Company.

"Co-ordinators Meeting." Minutes. Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, December 19, 1979, p. 1.

Deloria, Vine, Jr. 1999. *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America*. New York: Routledge.

– –. 1972. *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.

Dyck, Noel and John R. McLeod. 1973. "Report on the Recent Events of the Removal of the Students from Kinistino Schools and the Expansion of the James Smith Schools." Unpublished document. Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College.

Ermine, Willie, "Aboriginal Epistemology." In Marie Battiste and Jean Barman (eds.), *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995): 101-12.

Federation of Saskatchewan Indians. 1980. *Constitutional Position on the Entrenchment of Aboriginal and Treaty Rights* (draft prepared by Delia Opekokew).

Fine Day. IH-DM.61. Indian History Film Project. Source: Dr. D.G. Mandelbaum. Interview Location: Sweet Grass Reserve. Interviewer: Dr. D.G. Mandelbaum. Interpreter: Solomon Bluehorn. Interview Date: September 10, 1934.

Fox, Edward. 1978. *Enewuk*. Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College.

Heidegger, Martin. 1927. *Being and Time*. New York: Harper and Row.

Hodgson, Eugene. n.d. "Saskatchewan School Committee" (unpublished paper). Saskatoon, SK.

Howe, Craig. 1998. "Cyberspace is No Place for Tribalism" *Wicazo Sa Review* 13, no. 2: 19-28.

Jacobs, Allen. 2000. Personal communication.

Kroker, Arthur. 1984. *Technology and the Canadian Mind*. Montreal: New World Perspective.

"The Louse that Roared." *Northian*. March-April 1974. Reprinted from *The Saskatchewan Indian* (January 1974).

McLuhan, Marshall. 1989. "Marshall Probes." In George Sanderson and Frank Macdonald (eds.), *Marshall McLuhan: The Man and His Message*. Goldon, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.

McLeod, Jerry. 2000. Dialogue with Neal McLeod (James Smith Reserve (Cree), Saskatchewan).

McLeod, John R. 1976. "Treaty Six Commemoration Meeting" (January 19-20, Thunderchild Reserve).

——. 1975a. "Address by John McLeod to Treaty #6 Commenoration." Presented to the All Chiefs Conference. April 20, 1975. Private papers of John R. McLeod.

——. 1975b. Minutes from "Treaty Six General Meeting, Onion Lake Band Hall." Interpreter and Transcription: Anna Crowe. Onion Lake, Saskatchewan. December 11, 1975. From the private papers of John R. McLeod.

Morrisseau, Norval. 1997. *Travels to the House of Invention*. Toronto: Key Porter.

Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College. 1973. "Proposal for a 'New' School to Serve Little Pine Lucky Man, Poundmaker." Under the Direction of the Band Councils of Little Pine Lucky Man Poundmaker. September 1973. From the private papers of John R. McLeod.

Savard, Jean-François. 1998. "A Theoretical Debate on the Social and Political Implications of Internet Implementation for the Inuit of Nunavut." *Wicazo Sa Review* 13, no. 2: 83-97.

School Committee Conference. 1969. Sixth Annual School Committee Conference. Sheraton-Cavalier. Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan. May 1 & 2, 1967. From the private papers of John R. McLeod.

Speck, Frank G. 1977. *Naskapi: The Savage Hunters of the Labrador Pennisula*. Norman: University of Oklahoma.

Tanner, Adrian. 1979. *Bringing Home Animals: Religious Ideology and Mode of Production of Mistassini Cree Hunters*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Tootoosis, Ernest. 1975. *Culture and the Cultural College* (black and white film, 30 minutes). Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Indian Federated College.

Tootoosis, John. 197). Interviewer: Murray Dobbin. Date of Interview: September 9, Interview Location: Poundmaker Reserve. Towards a New Past A1178/1179. Saskatchewan Archives Board.

Valaskaki, Gail. 1992. "Communication, Culture and Technology: Satellites and Northern Native Broadcasting in Canada." In Stephen Harold Riggins (ed.), *Ethnic Minority Media: The International Perspective*. London: Sage Publications.

Whitehead, Mr. And Mrs. Josie. 1976. Dialogue with John and Ida McLeod on the James Smith Reserve, Saskatchewan.

Wuttunee, William. 1971. *Ruffled Feathers: Indians in Canadian Society*. Calgary: Bell Books.

Earth, Land, and Healing

Patrick C. Douaud

"These things from ancient times arise from one:
The sky is whole and clear.
The earth is whole and firm.
The spirit is whole and strong.
The valley is whole and full.
The ten thousand things are whole and alive."
(Lao Tsu)

Written in the sixth century BCE, this thirty-ninth proposition of the *Tao Te Ching* (the foundation of Taoism) says it all: the sky is limitless above our heads; the earth is solid under our feet; the spirit permeates both; and there is unity and energy in all things. This sense of grounding of the human being in the natural world is constantly present in Oriental spiritual disciplines – be they yoga, tai chi, qi gong or aikido – where the feet connect with telluric forces and the crown of the head hangs from the firmament. This concept of the human body as a bridge between earth and heaven and as a vehicle for the spirit that animates them both is obviously alien to ordinary modern living, rooted as it is in dualism, mechanistic thinking, and greed for money and social position. Only recently has it been rediscovered and made fashionable in the West as an alternative to theism and as a potential source of great healing power. Ours is a society in crisis, rich in slogans and unpredictable in its trends: there is no telling whether the currently thriving New Age subculture will founder soon or whether it is here to last. But how does the earth-based concept of non-dualistic spirituality fare in traditional Aboriginal ethos, and how does this compare with other non-industrial worldviews? The present essay will explore this theme by first studying the relationship between earth and land, and then by examining in turn their respective healing power.

The Earth and the Land

For hunting peoples the earth is a beneficent, nourishing mother-type, a true *alma mater*: "it is from her womb that the animals derive" (Campbell 1991: 66), and it is to her that their spirits are sent back with appropriate placatory formulas

With a background in comparative literature, linguistics and anthropology, Patrick Douaud teaches Educational Foundations at the University of Regina and practices homoeopathic medicine part-time.

when the hunt is completed. I say "mother-type" here because the earth, as Black Elk remarked (Brown 1971: 6), is *both* grandmother (archetype of growth potential) and mother (prototype of fecundity), and therefore transcends these mere human categories to become a pillar of the spirit world. Such a primeval role is bound to generate feelings of mixed awe and respect, depending on the religiosity involved: it is interesting to note that whereas pre-industrial cultures generally worshipped the earth for reasons akin to those outlined in the *Tao Te Ching*, Christian societies, while recognizing its nourishing power, gave it nonetheless "an emphatically negative interpretation as the seat of hell" (Campbell 1991: 72). The earth was thus feared as a mysterious presence whose bowels lie menacingly beneath what Dante's *Inferno* (Song 3) somberly terms *la buia campagna* (the dark countryside) and *la terra lagrimosa* (the tearful land).

It is such a negative, paranoid attitude that has accompanied the sweeping campaign for the exploitation of the earth, set in motion by the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century and now reaching its painful climax. Under the pressure of colonialism the spiritual concept of *earth* in Aboriginal societies was forced to give way to the more materialistic concept of *land*, which had been prevalent in much of the Old World since the Neolithic. Growing disrespect for the earth has meant that the land could be measured, parcelled out, cut into pieces, leased, or taken away from those claiming to be its owners or at least its denizens. Aboriginal peoples who used to be semi-nomadic or nomadic have become very defensive when their land is under threat – not only because it represents their last rampart against submission and assimilation, but also because for them the land is still the earth's epidermis and the surface reality of a deeper spiritual presence.

This is why, in the words of Western Apache elders for instance, the land "makes the people live right"; but those who forget Aboriginal place-names "forget how to be strong" (Basso 1996: 61). This mythic dimension of the earth, seen as conferring energy to those who by keeping in contact with it remain worthy of it, is echoed in the written records of ancient classical mythology: one may think in particular of Antaeus, the Giant of Greek legends, son of Poseidon and Gaia, who when fighting regained his strength by touching the earth; Heracles vanquished him by holding him up in mid-air, thereby disconnecting him from his mother's telluric energy, until he died.

The power of the earth to sustain plant and animal life and therefore to give bountifully to humankind must be taken seriously: myths therefore arise to explain this bounty, and to give it meaning and direction. To the Australian Aborigines, for example,

> myths provided word maps of localities, told of the powers associated with the localities, encapsulated in words committed to memory most if not all of the data available to Aboriginal culture (Burridge 1973: 76).

The land thus retains the sacredness of the earth, causing a Western Apache elder to look around him and exclaim: "That is a good place [...]. These are all good places. Goodness is all around" (Basso 1996: 65). It naturally follows that the earth can inspire and the land can heal.

Earth Medicine

In traditional Chinese medicine the earth represents one of the five elements, the other four being wood, fire, metal and water. The earth is a symbol of dampness and transformation in nature; in the human body it stands for muscular tissue and

the state of pensiveness (Liu 1995: 50). Intuitively, then, the thinkers and experimenters who in the past 5,000 years have built the complex edifice of Chinese medicine have also perpetuated through its symbolism the primeval understanding of the earth as fecundity, strength, and reflection. In this way they have not been guilty of breaking the continuity with an Aboriginal past which we all share, albeit at different removes. And why, in any case, should they have done such a thing?

> Long before we came, in our popular culture, to the curious assumption that the newer is always better and the more progressive is the more accurate, we held the opposite view: that ancient things were powerful and true in ways that could never be again (Grossinger 1990: 37).

In Europe too this sacred conception of the earth dominated the pre-civilized ages. The Celtic Druids, for example, were fervent worshippers of nature and localized the Other World inside hills and beneath lakes; they also recognized centrally placed landmarks as points of contact between this world and the next – what Le Roux and Guyonvarc'h (1986: 281) have termed *omphaloi* (Greek for "navels"). These constructs represent the oldest spiritual medicine in the world: earth medicine, that of our hunting-gathering ancestors and of populations unaffected by the institutions of civilization. In a healing context, then, one first resorted to plants, hopefully to good effect; but in case of failure the purely spiritual took over in the form of prayers, incantations, magico-religious performances (involving for instance the shaman sucking out the disease object, such as a stone), or material symbols. A well-known example of the latter is the Plains Indian medicine bundle, which contains symbolic representations of supernatural forces seen in the owner's visions. It is a portable tabernacle of sorts, into which can go anything invested with power and meaning; it is the point of contact or omphalos between the earth and the spirit world.

Land Medicine

The surface of the earth, the land, has been the cause of wars and the object of treaties; it has been excavated, exploited and laid bare; but it has nevertheless remained a powerful source of energy for Aboriginal healers. The best-known and most symbolic instance of this healing relationship with the land is that of the Navajo sandpainting, aimed at bringing the patient into a state of *hózhó* or complete harmony:

> The patient internalizes the image of hózhó represented in the sandpaintings used in healing ceremonies, and experiences their design as a spiritual mandala in terms of which physical recovery can take place (Lyon 1996: 110).

This is strikingly similar to the Tibetan sandpainting painstakingly elaborated by monks over a period of time so as to represent a landscape of Buddhist mythology in the midst of which one's spirit can wander. As in the Navajo case, after its deeper significance has been properly transmitted the Tibetan sandpainting – an admirable work of art in its own right – is destroyed and returned to the land. Spirituality obviously dominates over artistic ownership, as the latter is a concept which arises when the holistic detachment of spirituality gives way to individualistic devotion to materialism.

Traditional healing, be it Navajo, Tibetan, Cree, or Australian Aborigine,

invokes an elusive energy or vital force which underpins an individual's state of health and can be acted upon to redress diseased states. Practitioners of such therapies also believe that an organism cannot be dissociated from its psychosocial environment: within such a worldview it is essential to "find out all that has happened and then try to put the sick person's mind at rest" (Burridge 1973: 75) – as good an example as any of holistic medicine practiced with very few resources. These simple, land-based resources nonetheless allow the traditional healer or shaman to bring to the surface, analyze, and eventually cure the physical illness or psychological torment, which from the very beginning was seen as pertaining not only to the individual, but also to the family and the society (Helman 1996: 70).

Although Western therapies have become increasingly holistic and are witnessing in some places a blending of biomedicine, complementary medicine and psychotherapy, mention of traditional shamanistic practices is still likely to raise many an eyebrow. Yet these cannot be dismissed lightly, as a shaman is perfectly capable of conducting an in-depth psychomedical investigation, so that at the beginning of the healing session

> he would set the background, reciting many events of the patient's life leading up to the appearance of the symptoms (which he would have gathered by listening to gossip, unobtrusive interviewing, and other data-gathering devices readily at hand in a small community) (Hughes 1996: 147).

Could this not be considered sound advice too in the practice of such Western therapies as counseling, psychoanalysis or homoeopathy? In the case of traditional healers, investigative astuteness and the interpretation of dreams are often accompanied by a considerable knowledge of plants, as well as of their gathering procedures and possible combinations, so that spectacular results may be obtained – independently of the patient's cultural background and even in the case of notoriously intractable diseases such as psoriasis (see for example Young *et al.* 1989: 78ff). From the spiritual power of the earth to the bounty of the land, Aboriginal and pre-industrial societies have garnered a wisdom of grounding, of harmony, and of acceptance.

This wisdom was transmitted in part to early Western philosophers. Marcus Aurelius, the Stoic philosopher-emperor of second-century Rome, wrote:

> Pass then through this tiny span of time in accordance with Nature, and come to thy journey's end with a good grace, just as an olive falls when it is fully ripe, praising the earth that bare it and grateful to the tree that gave it growth (Haines 1999: 95).

Equally grounded in acceptance is the philosophy of Boethius, who three hundred years after Marcus Aurelius and awaiting his execution on orders from King Theodoric, found solace in praising Nature, who "in her foresight keeps the vast universe tied fast, each single thing, in indissoluble bonds" (Stewart *et al.* 1990: 237). What then has happened to Western philosophy since? In following the paths of religiosity and then intellectualism, it has wandered farther and farther away from earth and land spirituality; but can it still heal us? Can it still prepare us for death?

Through verbosity one may attain religiosity and intellectualism, but certainly not spirituality: Western philosophers, who for the past twenty-five centuries have mostly given us tools for culturally acceptable rational thinking, are proof

enough of this; so are theologians, who have given us tools for culturally acceptable irrational thinking. Both parties have passed on an attitude of intellectualized acceptance which, with very few exceptions (we may consider Saint Francis of Assisi and Meister Eckhart among them), is detached from any preoccupation with the earth or the land or the nature that surrounds us. Marcus Aurelius and Boethius, already quoted, used reason and common sense to face death, and occasionally looked at their true place in Nature. At the end of the Renaissance they were echoed in this by Montaigne, who in his twentieth essay, "To Philosophize is to Learn How to Die," quoted Nature too – albeit in a semi-jocular manner:

> Let Death find me planting my cabbage, but not caring about her and still less about my imperfect garden (Montaigne 1969: 93).

Although laudable for its simple wisdom, such a statement is more expressive of resigned acceptance than of true spirituality, which lies beyond both half-hearted humour and blind faith, grounded as it is in active discipline or in the sublimation of suffering. Consider for example the young woman whom Victor Frankl saw dying in a Nazi concentration camp: "I am grateful that fate has hit me so hard," she said; and pointing through the window of the shack she added, "This tree here is the only friend I have in my loneliness" (Frankl 1984: 90). For true spirituality, rooted in the here and now, yet transcending it, defies the verbal explanations of philosophy and theology; its dynamic stillness is best expressed through physical, meditative and even ritualistic practices.

Campbell (1993: 102) tells a wonderful story in this respect. At a conference in Japan he watched as a respected American social philosopher commented to a Shinto priest about the latter's religion, "I don't get the ideology; I don't get the theology." After a moment of reflection the Shinto priest replied: "I think we don't have ideology... We don't have theology. We dance."

Let us dance, then. Not in the frenzied manner of medieval Christians exorcizing their terror of the Black Death with dances such as *Ad mortem festinamus* ("Towards Death we hasten"). Nor in the elaborate manner of ballerinas, expressing a creative artist's feelings through the minutely rehearsed movements of their sophisticated art. But to the pulse of the earth, our feet tracing the contours of the land, our heads aloft in the spirit world. After all, for time immemorial this has been the Aboriginal way.

References

Basso, K.H. 1996. *Wisdom Sits in Places*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Brown, J.E.1971 [1953]. *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*. New York: Penguin.

Burridge, K. 1973. *Encountering Aborigines*. New York: Pergamon.

Campbell, J. 1991 [1959]. *The Masks of God, Vol. 1: Primitive Mythology*. New York: Arkana.

– –. 1993 [1972]. *Myths to Live By*. New York: Arkana.

Frankl, V.E. 1984 [1959]. *Man's Search for Meaning*. New York: Washington Square Press.

Grossinger, R. 1990 [1980]. *Planet Medicine*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.

Haines, C.R. 1999 (ed. & trans.). *Marcus Aurelius*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press.

Helman, C.G. 1996 [1984]. *Culture, Health and Illness*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Hughes, C. 1996. "Ethnopsychiatry." In C.F. Sargent and T.M. Johnson (eds.), *Medical Anthropology: Contemporary Theory and Method*. Westport: Praeger.

Lao Tsu. 1997. *Tao Te Ching*, trans. By Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English. New York: Vintage.

Le Roux, F. and C.J. Guyonvarc'h. 1986. *Les Druides*. Rennes: Ouest-France.

Liu, Yanchi. 1995. *The Essential Book of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Vol. 1: Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lyon, W.S. 1996. *Encyclopedia of Native American Healing*. New York: Norton.

Masseron, A. (ed. & trans.) 1963. *Dante: Inferno*. Paris: Club Français du Livre.

Montaigne, M. de. 1969 [1588]. *Essais*. Paris: Club Français du Livre.

Stewart, H.F., E.K. Rand and S.J. Tester (trans.) 1990. *Boethius: Tractates; The Consolation of Philosophy*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press.

Young, D., G. Ingram and L. Swartz. 1989. *Cry of the Eagle: Encounters with a Cree Healer*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.

Aboriginal Women's Health and Healing on the Plains

Linda Otway

History demands of us to assume our dignity, our equality, and our humanity. We must not move towards the future with anything less. Nor can we pursue scholarship in any other way.

(Emma LaRoque 1996: 15).

Introduction

I was born Linda Francis and I am a member of the Kahkewistahaw First Nation in southern Saskatchewan. I am Plains Cree on my father's side and Swampy Cree/Métis from Cumberland House on my mother's side. I was born in Ile à la Crosse, Saskatchewan and throughout my childhood lived in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. As an adult, I have lived and worked mainly in northern and southern Saskatchewan. I have three adult children and four grandchildren.

I am addressing the topic of Aboriginal Women's Health and Healing on the Plains because the present and future health of Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan and in Canada necessitates the reaffirmation and renewal of the role of women in our communities. Indigenous people in Canada have suffered a history of colonialism since the arrival of Europeans; this history has taken its toll on the social and economic well-being of the people. While both men and women have been adversely affected, the impact of colonialism on Aboriginal women has been especially devastating.

A recent publication by the Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat, *Profile of Aboriginal Women in Saskatchewan*, presented alarming statistics about the reality facing many Aboriginal women in the province today. The profile offered the following conclusions with respect to the health of Aboriginal women:

> Aboriginal women experience poor health outcomes to a much greater extent than non-Aboriginal women. Their life spans are shorter; they are more likely to be disabled; they are hospitalized more frequently.

Linda Otway is an Assistant Professor of Indian Studies at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College in Regina. She teaches courses on women's issues, research methods, contemporary issues, history, and culture.

> Aboriginal women are more likely than non-Aboriginal women to smoke, to be in treatment for drug and alcohol addiction, and to contract HIV.
>
> The poor health status of Aboriginal women is linked to other factors such as poverty and unemployment, lower social status, instability and violence in their families and communities, and inadequate housing and living conditions.
>
> Improvements to the determinants of health should lead to better well-being for Aboriginal women.

The purpose of this essay is to examine the historical roots of the position of Aboriginal women in the dismal health statistics on the Plains, primarily in Saskatchewan, and to address the need for those changes in public policy and program approaches that would contribute to the improved health and healing of Aboriginal women.

Historical Background

Colonialism has been described by James Frideres, a sociology professor at the University of Calgary, as a seven-step process: 1) the uninvited arrival of the colonizer into the territory; 2) the destruction of indigenous social and cultural institutions by the colonizer; 3) the creation of economic dependency by the indigenous people on the colonizer; 4) the establishment of external political control; 5) the provision of low-level social services such as health, education and housing; 6) the use of a colour line, i.e. racism, to justify the above; and 7) the weakening of the indigenous people's resistance (Frideres 2001: 4–12).

All of these steps involved in the process of colonialism are evident with respect to the experience of Aboriginal women since the arrival of the Europeans. The dispossession of Indian peoples of their lands was clearly the most genocidal act in this process because survival and well-being had been insured by their connection to the land. The vegetation and wild life that were sustained by the land, in turn sustained the people by providing their food, clothing, tools, medicines, and homes.

Pre-contact Indian society on the Plains was an egalitarian society with no institutionalized gender or class domination (Bourgeault 1983). The division of men's and women's labour was based on men doing the hunting and women the gathering. Gender roles were not rigid, but for the most part men did the hunting and protecting while women did everything else: Indian women have often been referred to as "beasts of burden" (Wiest 1983: 29). However, the women were just as important as the men to the survival of the people; they were therefore not dominated or viewed as possessions by the men.

Health and healing in traditional, pre-contact Indian society was an individual's responsibility. A holistic approach was used that involved mind, body, spirit and heart (feelings). Healers or shamans could be either men or women (Mendelbaum 1979: 146), and were usually born with a natural gift for healing. They also studied under the guidance of Elders what healers must come to know through experience and spiritual development. Women also acted as midwives, and as such had to possess a sound knowledge of nutrition, herbology, gynecology, obstetrics, and counselling (Malloch 1982: 105). Known herbal medicines and cures were often traded between tribes. For example, Mendelbaum has documented the trade between Plains Cree and Saulteaux: the Cree traded horses and

clothes, and the Saulteaux in return provided herbal medicines and instructions on their uses (Mendelbaum 1979: 146).

The weakening of traditional Indian medicines and cures began with the contact with missionaries and the dispossession of Indian people and their lands. Shamanism was viewed as demonic by Christian missionaries, and they made it their sacred duty to eradicate the beliefs and customs connected with traditional health and healing. For example, students at the church-run residential schools were admonished on the evils of Indian ceremonies and practices purporting to maintain spiritual purity and growth (Campbell 1991).

The surrender of the land through treaty signing and the subsequent dispossession of the land through relocation onto Indian reserves prevented Plains Indians from following their nomadic way of life. This in turn prevented the people from gathering the herbal medicines they had used from time immemorial, and knowledge of the herbs and their medicinal uses was all but obliterated. Moreover, the introduction from Europe of diseases against which the Plains Indians had no immunity or cures annihilated untold numbers of people. Weatherford writes:

> Never in human history have so many new and virulent diseases hit any one people all at the same time. Small pox, bubonic plague, tuberculosis, malaria, yellow fever, influenza, and the other major killers of the Old World had been totally unknown in America until the arrival of Columbus. These diseases swept rapidly through the people, who lacked all immunities against them. The Indians also lacked immunities to what are often called the childhood diseases of the Old World. Diseases such as measles, mumps and whooping cough that provoked only a minor illness among Europeans and Africans proved deadly to whole villages of Indians who had never before encountered any of those germs (Weatherford 1988: 195).

Population estimates of the indigenous peoples of the Americas prior to contact are between 90 and 112 million people. In North America today, the total population is estimated at 1.5 million: this means that at least 90 million people were wiped out as a result of European diseases. The Indians of the Americas were not only numerous, but they were also healthy. According to Nikiforuk, "(t)hey suffered none of the ailments that wobbled the legs, loosened the teeth and rattled the lungs of Europeans. There was no smallpox, no measles, no plague, no leprosy and no influenza, no malaria and no yellow fever... the idea of living well and staying healthy formed an essential core of their religion" (Nikiforuk 1991: 76).

In the face of this holocaust, Indian practitioners found their cures impotent, and this led to forgetting about traditional medicine. Nevertheless, some English places are a living memorial to the once powerful role of Indian medicine, with names such as Medicine Lake (Montana), Medicine Bow Forest (Wyoming), or Medicine Hat (Alberta) (Weatherford 1988: 196).

In addition to the enormous proportions of these diseases, dispossession of the land and of its resources, as well as the introduction of the Indian Act in 1869 and 1876, contributed further destructive forces with which Indian people were forced to contend.

The Indian Act

In the Indian Act, an Indian was defined as a male: a female obtained her

Indian status as a daughter, or as a wife, of an Indian male. According to section 11 (1) (f) and section 12 (1) (b) of the Indian Act, if an Indian woman married a non-Indian male, she lost her Indian status. If an Indian male married a non-Indian female, she gained Indian status. One can take an educated guess as to why the Indian Act discriminated against Indian women: when genocide is on the minds of legislators, the women and children become the targets (Jamieson 1978: 112). Ninety-five per cent of enfranchisements (the loss of Indian status) were involuntary enfranchisements of Indian women. Indian women just had no choice. They were no longer able to live on reserves, and lost benefits such as education rights, land rights, economic development provisions – they were not even allowed burial with their forebears on reserve land. This further dispossession of Indian women, this time from reserve land, created pauperization, culture loss, and social pathologies among them (Sutherland 1995: 60)

The Indian Act also undermined the traditional roles of Indian women in their families and communities. Ceremonies such as the Sundance, which provided a significant social role for women, were banned. Indian children were forced into residential schools which deprived them of their familiar, loving and nurturing homes and communities. Parents lost their parenting skills owing to generations of children attending these schools; and residential school survivors have disclosed countless incidents of physical, emotional, and sexual abuses. Loss of culture and language resulted from the practice of severely punishing children if they spoke their native language (Dieter 1999: 78–79). The multi-generational and socially pervasive impact of the residential school system was so far-reaching that it is difficult to evaluate. In her book, *From Our Mothers' Arms*, Connie Dieter writes:

> Many First Nations people, and others, have blamed the high number of health and addiction disorders, the high suicide and overall mortality rates, the family and community disintegration on the effects of attending residential schools. Some survivors and their communities have lost the skills needed to be healthy individuals. The loss of nurturing parents; loss of parenting skills; loss of identity, low self-esteem; the inability to think independently; the lack of unity within families and communities; the loss of language, culture, and respect for self; and finally, the loss of spiritual values have left communities in chaos (Dieter 1999: 78).

The high incidence of family violence among Aboriginal women is seen as one of the most tragic results of the residential schools, as loss of traditional values, poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, overcrowded housing and low self-esteem play out in the lives of Aboriginal women. Eight out of ten Aboriginal women have indicated that they contend with violence in their homes: the profound impact this has on Aboriginal children is indescribable (Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat 1999: 40–41).

Towards a Solution: The Path to Healing and Health

The most recent definitive work on Aboriginal health in Canada was completed by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP). It states:

> Canada is widely thought to be one of the best countries in which to live. In 1994, the United Nations Development Programme measured the quality of life around the world, using a variety of social and economic indicators. Canada placed first.

> Yet, within Canada's borders, there are two realities. Most Canadians enjoy adequate food and shelter, clean water, public safety, protection from abject poverty, access to responsive medical and social services, and the good health that results from these things. Aboriginal people are more likely to face inadequate nutrition, substandard housing and sanitation, unemployment and poverty, discrimination and racism, violence, inappropriate or absent services, and subsequent high rates of physical, social and emotional illness, injury, disability and premature death. The gap separating Aboriginal from non-Aboriginal people in terms of quality of life as defined by the World Health Organization remains stubbornly wide (RCAP 1996, Vol. 3, Chap. 3: 107–8).

The RCAP also defined what "health" means to Aboriginal people, namely: "a balance in the life-support systems that promote mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being" (ibid., 109). "Healing" is viewed as:

> Personal and societal recovery from the lasting effects of oppression and systematic racism experienced over generations. Many Aboriginal people are suffering not simply from specific diseases and social problems, but also from a depression of spirit resulting from 200 or more years of damage to their cultures, languages, identities and self-respect. The idea of healing suggests that to reach 'whole health', Aboriginal people must confront the crippling injuries of the past. Yet, doing so is not their job alone. Only when the deep causes of Aboriginal ill health are remedied by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together will balance and harmony – or health and well-being be restored (ibid., 109).

Quoting extensively from the RCAP, Fox and Long (2000) assert that efforts to revitalize Aboriginal culture have been accompanied by continued demands for structural changes in a wide variety of areas, including: restoring community standards and inclusive forms of representation in decision making; enforcing community safety; and addressing problems related to health care, education, criminal justice, and economic development policies. Since the 1960s, Aboriginal peoples have advocated that they themselves are best suited to identify and develop policies and programs that serve their needs. Though many government representatives have deemed that such an arrangement is impossible or at best unlikely to occur in the immediate future, Aboriginal people have continued to assert that those who have perpetuated violence and illness need to be an integral part of the healing process. Some of the strategies recommended by the RCAP and by Fox and Long (2000) are as follows:

> All Aboriginal people should be invited and enabled to take responsibility for changes that will affect their own lives.
>
> Aboriginal peoples should have more control over policy development, funding, and program implementation in all areas of their lives.
>
> National forums should be established to address the myriad issues involved in the areas of physical violence, criminal justice, and community development as they relate to Aboriginal people.
>
> Expert Advisory Committees should be appointed by the federal government to facilitate discussions, program implementation, and policy changes in all areas where physical violence is a problem.
>
> The federal government should establish a mental health policy for Aboriginal peoples by the year 2000.

> Prevention, intervention, and postvention policies and programs should take into account the unique experiences and perspectives of the Aboriginal people they are meant to serve.
>
> Comprehensive education programs in family violence, suicide, and criminal justice should be established for leaders and other members of Aboriginal communities, as well as for professionals and lay practitioners working with Aboriginal people in these areas.
>
> There should be support for community-based alternatives to the formalized systems of justice, health care, family and child welfare, and economic development that incorporate customary law and traditional practices and, where needed, facilitate healing and reconciliation.
>
> Social, educational, health and justice-related services should be implemented for Aboriginal people living in urban areas (Fox and Long 2000: 295–96).

Conclusion

Naomi Adelson's study of the health and well-being of the Cree, entitled, *'Being Alive Well': Health and the Politics of Cree Well-Being*, opens with the statement:

> For the Cree… a sense of 'health' – or of 'being Cree,' for that matter – cannot be understood outside the context of colonial and neo-colonial relations in Canada. Indigenous Canadians – Indian, Inuit or Metis – continue to live with the effects of displacement, discriminatory legislation, failed attempts at assimilation, forced religious conversion, and pervasive racism (Adelson 2000: 9).

Adelson discovered that the definition of health among the Cree was very different from the common definitions found in the dominant society and among health professionals. The Cree defined health as being allowed to be Cree in a traditional way, which would amount to being as healthy as the land. Applying these definitions to the health and healing of the Aboriginal peoples of the Plains necessitates not only the renewal of Aboriginal cultures and world views, but also the pursuit of research by and for Aboriginal Health practitioners and researchers, as well as a determined effort on the part of state policy makers to incorporate the world views and recommendations of the Aboriginal peoples themselves into new strategies and initiatives that really address the health and healing of Aboriginal peoples. After all, the old approaches obviously have not worked.

Acknowledgement

I wish to acknowledge the financial support of the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence and the Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat, which has made my research possible.

Bibliography

Adelson, Naomi. 2000. *"Being Alive Well": Health and the Politics of Cree Well-Being*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

Bourgeault, Ron. 1989. "Race, Class and Gender: Colonial Domination of Indian Women." *Socialist Studies, A Canadian Annual* 5.

– –. 1983. "Women in Egalitarian Society." *New Breed Journal*.

Campbell, Maria. 1990. "Journey to Healing" (video).

Dieter, Constance. 1997. *From Our Mothers' Arms: The Intergenerational Impact of Residential Schools in Saskatchewan*. Toronto: United Church Publishing House.

Fox, Terry and David Long. 2000. Struggles within the Circle: Violence, Healing, and Health on a First Nations Reserve." In *Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues*. Toronto: Harcourt Canada.

Frideres, James S. and Rene R. Gadacz. 1998. *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: Contemporary Conflicts*. Toronto, Prentice Hall.

Jamieson, Kathleen. 1986. "Sex Discrimination and the Indian Act." In J. Rick Ponting (ed.), *Arduous Journey: Canadian Indians and Decolonization*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart.

LaRoque, Emma. 1994. "The Colonization of a Native Woman Scholar." In Christine Miller and Patricia Chuchryk (eds.), *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, and Strength*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Malloch, Lesley. "Indian Medicine, Indian Health, Study Between Red and White Medicine." *Women Studies* 10, nos. 2 & 3.

Mandelbaum, David G. 1979. *The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical, and Comparative Study*. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center.

Nikiforuk, Andrew. 1991. "The Great Fire." *Equinox* 59 (September/October).

Royal Commission on Aboriginal People. 1994. *Health and Healing*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services.

– –. 1995. *Gathering Strength*, Vol. 3. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services.

Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat. 1996. *Profile of Aboriginal Women in Saskatchewan*. Regina: Government of Saskatchewan.

Sutherland, Linda. 1996. "Citizen Minus: Aboriginal Women and Indian Self-Government, Race, Nation, Class and Gender." MA thesis, University of Regina.

Weatherford, Jack. 1986. *Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World*. New York: Fawcett Columbine.

Wiest, Katherine. 1981. "Beasts of Burden and Menial Slaves: Nineteenth Century Observations of Northern Plains Indian Women." In Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine (eds.), *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Drawn to the Land: An Urban Métis Woman Makes Her Connection

Bev Cardinal

This is an essay on the Métis people and our connection to the land. From the start, I want to make it perfectly clear that I am not here representing the view of Métis people in general, the Métis community at large, or the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. I am here solely as an individual of Métis ancestry who wants to share with you some of the deep connections and insights I have made in my personal journey to "get back to the land."

My Personal Quest

The last time I was "on the land" was November 4 last year. I remember the date clearly because it was my daughter's 25th birthday. But it was also the last, truly glorious day of autumn last year: the temperature was a balmy 23°C, and the imminent snowstorm known as an "Alberta clipper" was still hours away.

By anyone's standards, it was a truly magnificent day! Not only did I have the absolute good fortune to be spending that day in the company of Elders, good friends, colleagues and students participating in a "cultural retreat" at Blackstrap Lodge on Lake Blackstrap near Dundurn — I had also already planned well in advance to take advantage of the setting and do some exploring.

Without a doubt, the best part of that day for me was putting on my hiking boots and taking off by myself in the early afternoon to walk and walk in those wonderful, powerful hills! The wind was warm but smelled just a little of "snow." The sky was perfectly cloudless and the sun reflected off the water. The prairie grass was fully ripened and rustled as I walked through it, my sights set on a point ahead in the distance where I knew I would be able to get a clear, unencumbered view of the lake and valley below.

There really are no words to describe the feeling of peace and comfort which settles over me whenever I am on the land as I was that day in November. It's quite a powerful yet humbling experience, and these visits have the effect of helping restore some balance in my life: being "on the land" brings me in touch with

Beverly Cardinal has spent most of her career working in the area of Métis post-secondary education, training and employment. She is now Provincial Aboriginal Coordinator with Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management.

myself in ways which I cannot adequately do justice to with words. Suffice it to say, these visits to the land are essential to my overall well-being – my spiritual, physical, emotional and mental "circle of life."

So what exactly is it about being "on the land" that so captivates me? I am, after all, an urban Métis woman – city born and bred, and totally dependent on my cappuccino to get me through the day! What, then, makes me crave "being on the land"? What makes me want to take those journeys to the Qu'Appelle Valley where my family has such strong ties? What makes up this mysteriously innate "homing device" which seems to come as part of my "standard equipment"?

In order to answer these questions, I needed to take myself on a personal journey – a quest, if you will – which I hoped would explain this strong, magnetic pull to the land. It is this journey – this personal quest - which I want to describe here. Through historical and political meanderings, accompanied by some specific family history and, lastly and probably most importantly, some of the teachings of my Elders, I hope to make clear my views on the importance and sacredness of "the land."

Some Important Terms

Before beginning, I feel it is important to clarify some of the terms I will be using throughout this essay:

Aboriginal: an umbrella term which includes all Indian (or First Nations) peoples, the Inuit, and the Métis;

First Nations: a term used when specifically referring to Indian people of a particular nation or tribal group;

Métis: a name used to refer to the people of mixed Indian and European heritage and their descendants.

Historical Perspectives

When I began to examine the Aboriginal policies of the Government of Canada, I saw that they reflected the mistaken view that there are only two major groups of Aboriginal peoples in Canada: First Nations and Inuit.

However, the Métis are distinct Aboriginal peoples, neither First Nations nor Inuit. Although our early ancestors included First Nations people and Inuit, we have been an independent people for generations.

In 1982, the constitution of Canada was amended to state that Canada's Aboriginal peoples include the Métis. Métis, of course, people did not need to be told that: we have always known who we are! We have always known, too, that Canada would be a different place today if Métis people had not played a major role in this country's development: modern Canada is largely the product of a historical partnership between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and Métis people were integral to that partnership.

Intermarriage between First Nations and Inuit women and European fur traders and fishermen produced children, but the birth of Métis culture took longer. At first, the children of mixed unions were brought up in the traditions of their mothers or (less often) their fathers. Gradually, however, distinct Métis cultures emerged, combining European and First Nations or Inuit heritages in unique ways.

Economics played a major role in this process. The special qualities and skills of the Métis population made them indispensable members of Aboriginal/non-

Aboriginal economic partnerships, and that association contributed to the shaping of their cultures. Using their knowledge of European and Aboriginal languages, their family connections and their wilderness skills, they helped to extend non-Aboriginal contacts deep into the North American interior. As interpreters, diplomats, guides, couriers, freighters, traders and suppliers, the early Métis people contributed massively to European penetration of North America.

From this earliest history, from these earliest relationships, it is safe to say that the Métis did, indeed, evolve into a "plains culture" or a "buffalo culture" – a culture solely dependent upon the land and its resources. Along with the evolution of the Métis culture there came to be a stronger, perhaps more significant tie to the land – a political link strongly forged by decades of backbreaking hard work, community and nation-building, broken government promises and, eventually, bloodshed. It is this political relationship which I will discuss next.

Political Perspective

To articulate the "political" Métis connection to the land, it is important to understand some of the common terminology associated with contemporary discussions concerning Métis land issues. Some of the terms people tend to be most familiar with are "Métis land claim," "Métis rights," and especially "Métis self-government."

Just as the First Nations people of Canada have legitimate claims to special rights to land and resource use, as well as other rights based upon historical Treaties with the Crown, so do the Métis have legitimate rights based upon their significant historical contributions to Canada – contributions largely unrecognized by mainstream society. While Indian claims in Western Canada tend to be defined and disputed within a purely legal framework, Métis claims have more often been based upon economic, political and moral arguments. Only in specific instances have Métis claims been made on purely legal grounds.

Métis claims for compensation do not concentrate on land in the same way that Indian claims do. Although the acquisition of land is one component, I have discovered that current Métis leadership put considerable emphasis on claims for the right to self-government, with the appropriate control over key Métis institutions in the economic, educational and social spheres. Many Métis leaders indeed view the Métis as a "nation" or a "nation within a nation." Quite frankly, it has taken me some time to decide whether or not I concur with this view. As a Métis woman considerably (but not totally) removed from my "traditional" lifestyle, at first I could not see the benefit of such arguments for "land base" and "self-government." It has taken me many years of research and study to develop my personal position on this matter; but I confess that on this issue of Métis land compensation my position is quite moderate by the standards of most Métis leaders.

After much research and thinking I have concluded that, yes indeed, the Métis were effectually "robbed" by the federal government of land they were promised in the late 1800s. I have also personally concluded that land-based compensation could, in the long run, cost the government considerably less than any monetary settlement which might eventually be negotiated or ordered through the courts. I am further convinced that once the Métis have established a reasonable land-base, and with proper management and development of that land-base, they would over time come to rely less and less on government programs and services, and more and more on Métis-generated

employment, economic development and resource distribution opportunities. But again I wish to stress that these are just my personal opinions on a very controversial issue.

Do I personally see myself or my children or my grandchildren benefitting from any such "land claim" and potential "self-government"? Yes, I believe Métis families for generations to come would benefit from the preservation of traditional Métis ways of life and culture which such a properly managed land claim would afford. I also believe that a properly managed and sustainably developed land base would contribute to the development of contemporary, Métis-specific policies, programs, community development activities and social action aimed at improving and benefitting Métis people specifically and the larger Saskatchewan population generally.

Now, don't get me wrong: I'm no "Pollyanna" when it comes to this matter. I understand the need for ensuring that absolute accountability, integrity, leadership and sound management accompany any such developmental activity, and indeed am one of the most outspoken advocates of this position. This being said, I do fundamentally believe that, given the right conditions, Métis control over a Métis-specific land base could and should be successful: control of the land was, after all, the fundamental principle upon which our Métis forefathers lived, and for which they eventually fought and died! It is therefore not completely outside of our current reality as Métis people that we could again some day have control over our own land.

Familial Perspectives

The political aspects having been reviewed from my personal viewpoint, I now want to convey a more personal, emotional and perhaps meaningful perspective on what I have discovered about my own Métis tie to the land.

This narrative is based solely on my family history, particularly that of my father, my paternal grandfather and great-grandfather, as well as our family stories. These particular stories occur within a specific period and geographical area of our province: the Qu'Appelle Valley during the late 1800s to early 1900s.

Near the mid-point of the Qu'Appelle River Valley there are three lakes which run together; they are known as Pasqua Lake, Mission Lake, and Katepwa Lake. Our story takes place at the eastern end of Katepwa Lake.

By the late 1800s, many Métis families were on the move west, out of the Red River region and White Horse Plains of modern-day Manitoba and into the fertile, relatively unsettled area now known as the Qu'Appelle Valley in Saskatchewan. In 1876 two young (and I might add handsome) French-American brothers, Clement and William Peltier arrived at Katepwa Lake along with a group of Métis and white settlers. They were quick to establish a small community at the eastern end of the lake, because farther upstream, at Lebret and Fort Qu'Appelle, there were already growing communities which were competing for the prime river bottom land upon which they had all come to stake their claim.

This is an early account of the Katepwa Lake settlement:

> There were old land trails used by the Indians and early traders – one up the valley on the north side of the Qu'Appelle River and lakes (later called Prince Albert-Hudson Bay Trail) and one across country northwest from South Qu'Appelle entering the valley at Fort Qu'Appelle, where there was a Hudson's Bay Company trading post and centre of organized buffalo hunts.

> Every spring, when the river was in flood, a Hudson's Bay Company steam boat came from Fort Garry with supplies and trading goods, returning with furs, buffalo hides and pemmican. Not far east of Lake Katepwa the river banks were straight and high – ideal for the boats to collect "furs, hides and pemmican piled high," as observed by an early settler. In the early 1880's the Indian Trail along the north side of the Qu'Appelle Valley became the main freight trail between Winnipeg and Edmonton, and it was a common occurrence to see from two to three hundred Red River carts go along in a train...[1]

The account goes on to describe the arrival of the settlers at the eastern edge of Katepwa Lake (my great-grandfather Clem Peltier among them):

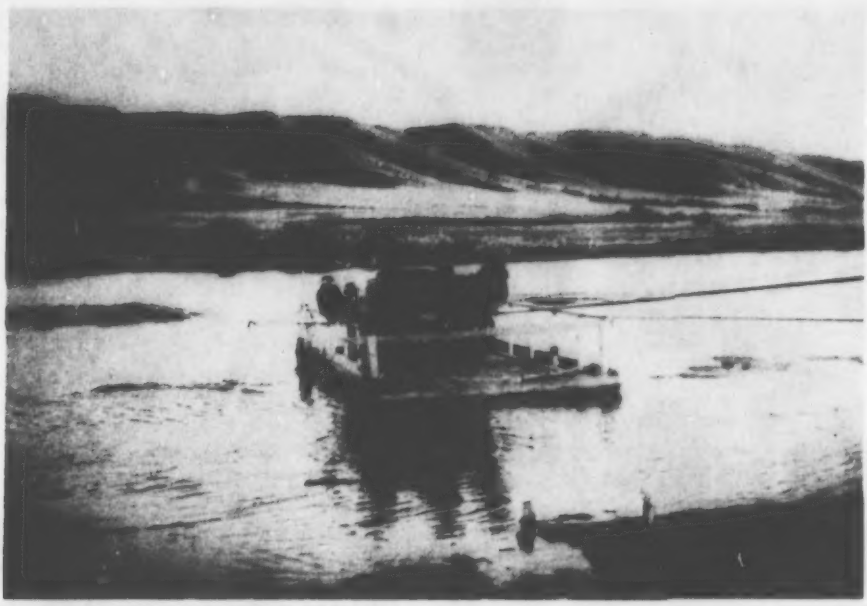
> They came by horse-drawn Red River carts, bringing some 50 horses, a few head of cattle, saws, axes, scythes, a wooden beam walking plow, and household items. In the summer, there would be a caravan of carts bringing supplies from Winnipeg to Fort Qu'Appelle and Troy (South Qu'Appelle)... The earliest pioneers brought only the barest necessities – tents, cooking utensils, tools and ploughs. They built sod homes with dirt floors, skins for a door, and mud chimneys. The availability of wood from the valley coulees and stones on the hillsides was appreciated. Some used lights made of string or cloth dipped in grease or tallow which gave a faint light. Others, later, had candles.[2]

When my great-grandfather, Clem Peltier, arrived at Katepwa in 1876, he was married to a young woman whose maiden name was Langlois. All that is known is that she died shortly after their arrival in the valley. Perhaps the trip had been too hard on her, or perhaps breaking new ground and starting from scratch had taken its toll: whatever the exact circumstances, she was not long for this world.

By 1880 – a mere four years after his arrival – Clem Peltier had become a successful businessman and land owner. Along with James Grant, son of the infamous Red River Métis leader Cuthbert Grant, Clem acquired stock, machinery, land and capital. It is reported that these two entrepreneurs were very generous with their assets and supported many of the other new farmers in the area.

Clem eventually took a second wife – my great-grandmother Marie Justine Grant, daughter of James Grant. They lived on land not far from the current site of the Anglican church at Katepwa; and they had two sons: Maurice and Henry, the latter being my grandfather.

The success of my great-grandfather is widely documented and denotes a man with a passion for independence and entrepreneurship: along with acquiring large tracts of land, he developed a large gardening operation; he also set up a brick factory at the end of the lake, and his brick is still seen in many places (Indian Head, Yellowgrass and Cupar to name a few). He owned and operated the only ferry crossing ever known on the lake, which enabled farmers north of the valley, from as far away as Melville and Yorkton, to take their wheat to Indian Head to the grist mill. He charged them 50 cents a crossing, and if they were late returning from town it is said that many a man had his team cared for and was given a bed for the night at the Peltier home. In later years, Clem and his son Henry owned a large steam engine, and they travelled around the countryside in the fall threshing for many farmers. Clem was also instrumental in ensuring the children within the community received an education, and he was one of the first members of the Katepwa Lake school board. Makeshift and temporary buildings eventually housed the Katepwa Lake school; and in 1919, using bricks from



Courtesy Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A7583
Bev Cardinal's great-grandfather, Clem Peltier, operated this ferry across Lake Katepwa at the turn of the century.

Clem's factory, the permanent school house at the end of Katepwa Lake was built.

In 1876, the land of the Qu'Appelle Valley had been the catalyst to bring First Nations, Métis and white settlers together in a successful partnership. However, following the 1885 Métis-led resistance at Batoche – the first incident of armed conflict involving the government against its own citizens - it is widely believed that the good and harmonious relationship between the Métis and white settlers in the Qu'Appelle Valley was tarnished. There is evidence that General Middleton, from his headquarters at Fort Qu'Appelle, "conscripted" non-Aboriginal ("white") men from the nearby settlements and farms to assist the government during their assault on the Métis settlement at Batoche in 1885. Many of the Métis of the Qu'Appelle Valley grappled with conflicting feelings about this uprising – some Métis men voluntarily travelled to Batoche while others stayed behind. Regardless of their decision or their roles in the events of 1885, the relationships between these Métis and white families as well as their mode of existence on that land were forever changed.

My grandfather, Henry, married my grandmother, Lucy Russell, and they were blessed with eleven children. They lived on a plot of land at the end of the lake, adjacent to my great-grandfather's original claim. My father, William, is the youngest of these children; he was born in 1927 in the original house built by my great-grandfather for his son and wife.

Over the years, the Peltier land has changed hands and, until just a few years ago, the original house in which my father was born remained standing, its most recent incarnation being that of a "Katepwa Lake cottage."

The Peltier land has now come full circle with my cousin's acquisition of the

original homestead in late 1999. My dad and I visited my cousin and her family on the site last summer as they were beginning construction of their family's new home.

It was the most amazing day. We sat outside with coffee in hand and listened to my dad reminisce about his childhood in those hills and the valley surrounding us. He described in great detail the sweep of the valley floor and recognized by sight the hills and coulees in which they played as children.

We laughed and laughed at the stories he told, and we were all captivated by the pride and the small catch in his voice as he described the simple, yet bountiful way of life they had experienced. As the only remaining living son of Henry and Lucy Peltier and one of our family's Elders, my dad, with this visit "back to the land," sent an important signal to my cousin's family that he approved of their plans and that, indeed, our grandfather and great-grandfather would be pleased to know the land was back in Peltier hands! Indeed, that land had come full circle!

Courtesy Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A7571
Bev Cardinal's ancestors, Bill (left) and Clem (seated) Peltier, with Camille Langlois, c. 1900.

Thus it is that my quest to connect with the land has almost come full circle. I want to conclude by summarizing what are perhaps the most important lessons I have learned: the lessons from my Elders.

Elders' Teachings and Traditional Perspectives

My Elders tell me that Aboriginal people have a special relationship to the land – that our people *belong to the land* which the Creator provided for us and our children. The Creator placed on the land all that Aboriginal people would need to survive in harmony and balance with nature. For Aboriginal people, the land is deeply intertwined with identity: they believe that they originate from the land – from their mother the Earth.

My Elders also tell me that the Creator made Aboriginal people the caretakers and stewards of the land. The people were told by the Creator to respect the gifts of the world around them.

My Elders further say that the only people who truly own the land are the generations yet unborn. Once born, you no longer own the land: instead, it becomes your responsibility to take care of the land for its rightful owners – the coming generations.

Think about that: *The only people who truly own the land are the generations yet unborn!* It seems to me, then, that my connection with the land – and, I suggest, every human being's connection with the land – is a responsibility given from the Creator as a gift and is an inherent component of all our cultures and all our heritages. As such it cannot be taken lightly.

As I strengthen and clarify my personal relationship to the land, I think about my historical, my political, my familial, and especially my spiritual connection to the land. As I have described to you in this essay, each of these four elements, taken separately, has a profound significance for me as a Métis woman. But when they are combined – the historical, the political, the familial and the spiritual perspectives on the land – they form a circle that is impossible to break or disconnect. And for me, the journey taken to discover these connections has indelibly tied me and my "Métisness" to all the power that is within that circle.

Notes

1. John H. Archer, *Lake Katepwa: Yesterday and Today* (Regina: Brigdens Photography/Graphics, 1984).
2. Ibid.

Bibliography

Archer, John H. 1984. *Lake Katepwa: Yesterday and Today*. Regina: Brigdens Photography/Graphics.

Government of Canada. 1996. *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. Ottawa: Canada Community Group Publishing.

Herriot, Trevor. 2000. *River in a Dry Land: A Prairie Passage*. Toronto: Stoddart.

Poetry and the Prairie: Writing, *Aboriginality*, and the Land

Randy Lundy

In her article entitled "Popular Images of Nativeness," Marilyn Dumont writes that "If you are old you are supposed to write legends, that is, stories that were passed down to you from your elders. If you are young, you are expected to relate stories about foster homes, street life and loss of culture and if you are in the middle, you are supposed to write about alcoholism or residential school. And somehow throughout this, you are to infuse everything you write with symbols of the native world view, that is: the circle, mother earth, the number four or the trickster figure. In other words, popular images of nativeness" (47).

As an Aboriginal person, especially perhaps as an Aboriginal writer, I am constantly faced with questions that reflect popular images of nativeness what I have chosen to call aboriginality. As an Aboriginal writer, you are supposed to be able to explain the traditional way of skinning a buffalo, once you and your brave palomino pony have chased it and brought it down with arrows; and you should be able to describe the weapons in detail the materials used, techniques of construction, and where to aim the arrows for best effect. For example, what is used for the flight feathers on the arrow? animal hair? quills? or actual feathers? and if so from what bird? All this even though the only buffalo you have ever seen were either behind fences or in national parks. And, oh, by the way, what is your Indian name? The disappointment is palpable if you answer you don't have one, and imagine the affront if you do have one but do not feel compelled or obliged to share such information!

As an informed Aboriginal writer and employee of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, you are supposed to have the inside scoop on what 'Indians' think about the east coast lobster dispute? the west coast land claims agreements? how traditional government will inform the administration of Nunavut? the business plan for Indian-run casinos in Saskatchewan? the protocol for transporting eagle feathers across the Canada-U.S. border? You should be an expert on status, non-status, and Métis hunting and fishing rights? What are the medicinal uses of spruce gum and willow bark? What is the best way to cook skunk cabbage? What

Randy Lundy is of Cree, Irish and Norwegian ancestry. He holds an MA in English from the University of Saskatchewan. An Assistant Professor of English at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, he is also a poet and the author of *Under the Night Sun*.

time of the year to gather wolfwillow seeds? What is the real secret for making bannock – you know, so it's not too heavy but doesn't become like Wonder Bread either? The questions are endless.

If you are tempted to solicit the questioner's opinion on 11th-century Scottish clan systems, the origin of the perogie, or Viking funeral customs, consider yourself an uppity Indian, a troublemaker, a potentially dangerous and unpredictable person to be watched closely through narrowed, suspicious eyes.

In her article, Dumont correctly observes, "there is a continuum of exposure to traditional experience in native culture, some of us have been more exposed to it than others, but this does not mean that those who have been more exposed to it are somehow more Indian, as if we were searching for the last surviving Indian. Because this notion of Indians vanishing is the effect of 19th century ideas about culture as static, this notion of culture as something immutable, compounded by the Indian Act, affects images of ourselves as either too Indian or not Indian enough. You're too Indian if you are not articulate in the English language ... and you're not native enough if ... you became articulate in English instead of your own native language. Because if you are articulate in English, then you may be seen as coming from a privileged class and are scrutinized to determine how native you really are, scrutinized for your authenticity (by both indian and white sides)" (47).

The eyes narrow, wary and watchful. You cannot be trusted to remain within the boundaries of someone else's expectations of who, what, and how you should be.

Dumont continues that "This prevalent 19th century notion of culture as static, which is founded on the belief that there exists in the evolution of cultures a pristine culture which if it responds to change is no longer pure, and therefore eroding and vanishing, affects our collective 'selfimages' as either: pure too Indian, or diluted - not Indian enough" (47–48). This leads Dumont to entertain certain questions: "If the representation of me is inaccurate, how does this impact on my art? But more importantly, How does this representation affect my self-image?" (48). She continues by stating that "the misrepresentation of me makes me doubt my experience, devalues my reality and tempts me to collude in an image which in the end disempowers me" (48).

Dumont goes on to write that "the pervasive images of natives as rural (*North of 60*), traditional (*Dances with Wolves*) and living in a predominantly subsistence economy affect how native people participate and are perceived as participating in the Canadian economy and political arenas... This is one experience of nativeness, and there is a multiplicity of experiences that go on being ignored because they do not fit a popular understanding of culture, but which have to be expressed because their denial by the image-making machine is another kind of colonialism ... [since] these monolithic, singular images of nativeness ... are popularly seductive but ultimately oppressive" (48–49).

And, so, as an Aboriginal writer you are asked to speak at a conference, let's call it the "Plain as the Eye Can See" conference, and you are expected to talk about Aboriginal people and the prairie. As a writer, you decide you will talk about writing and the landscape, and you entitle your talk "Poetry and the Prairie: Writing, *Aboriginality*, and the Land." As you approach the microphone, you have no idea what, if anything, you are about to say. Just days ago, the conference organisers informed you that *aboriginality* is not, in fact, even a word; but

you have cleverly constucted a meaning that seems, to you at least, to make some sense. However, having grown up north of the treeline, you feel incapable of truly addressing the prairie landscape. As someone who didn't grow up on the reserve, doesn't speak Cree, and couldn't survive a violent prairie winter on the land, you hardly feel capable of addressing Aboriginal people's experience of this landscape. And poetry – well, what do you really know about that equally mysterious topic. Perhaps, you think, you are a fraud, since you do not fit popular images of nativeness. You are a prairie transplant, and do like to think of yourself as "a poet."

As an Aboriginal person and as a writer, you are regularly asked to address audiences of various cultural backgrounds. These audiences make what seems to be a fairly logical assumption that since you are both Aboriginal and a writer, you are an Aboriginal writer. Having arrived at that perfectly logical conclusion, the audience quickly begins to formulate nagging questions: What is an Aboriginal writer? What is poetry? Sometimes, depending on the audience, they even wonder what an Aboriginal is? What does it mean to be a writer? What does it mean to be Aboriginal, though most people usually have some ideas about that already? What does it mean to be an Aboriginal writer? What is there in the writing that is identifiably Aboriginal? Why and how is Aboriginal writing different than other writing? Essentially, what makes your poetry "Indian"? Is it the trees, the rocks, the animals, along with the alcohol, violence, poverty, and other social ills? As if Aboriginal people alone hug trees, carry small stones home in their pockets, and are pulled out of themselves by the experience of encountering other living beings who return their gazes... As if Aboriginal people have cornered the market on social disfunction...

Thankfully, standing before such audiences, you are comforted by Thomas King's reflections that "when we talk about contemporary Native literature, we talk as though we already have a definition for this body of literature when, in fact, we do not. And, when we talk about Native writers, we talk as though we have a process for determining who is a Native writer and who is not, when, in fact, we don't "(King 1990: x). King reminds us that "What we do have is a collection of literary works by individual authors who are Native by ancestry ... [we] could simply say that Native literature is literature produced by Natives. This is a competent enough definition in that ... it insists that Native literature is literature produced by Natives and not by non-Natives, recognising that being Native is a matter of race rather than something more transitory such as nationality. One can become a Canadain writer, for example, without having been born in Canada, but one is either born Indian or one is not" (ibid.).

King goes on to write that "This definition – on the basis of race – however, makes a rather large assumption... . It assumes that the matter of race imparts to the Native writer a tribal understanding of the universe, access to a distinct culture, and a literary perspective that is unattainable by non-Natives. In our discussions of Native literature, we try to imagine that there is a racial denominator which fullbloods raised in cities, halfbloods raised on farms, quarterbloods raised on reservations, Indians adopted and raised by white families, Indians who speak their tribal language, Indians who speak only English, traditionally educated Indians, universitytrained Indians, Indians with little education, and the like all share. We know, of course, that this is not the case. We know that this is a romantic, mystical ... notion that the sheer number of cultural groups in North America,

the variety of Native languages, and the varied conditions of the various tribes should immediately belie" (ibid.: xxi).

When standing before an audience that expects you, as an Aboriginal writer, to address questions of *aboriginality*, writing, and the land, you may find comfort in King's words; but still, you are troubled by such questions yourself. You are troubled by the self-questioning Marilyn Dumont has written of. Again, you think of Thomas King, when he states that "Authenticity can be a slippery and limiting term when applied to Native literature for it suggets cultural and political boundaries past which we should not let our writing wander. And, if we wish to stay within these boundaries, we must not only write about Indian people and Indian culture, we must also deal with the concept of Indianness, a nebulous term that implies a set of expectations that are used to mark out what is Indian and that which is not" (ibid.: xv). You are still troubled by questions of *Nativeness*, *Indianness*, or, as you have termed it, *aboriginality*, and the audience's expectation that, at some point, you will address such questions.

As an Aboriginal person who was born in northern Manitoba, on the Canadian shield, and who grew up in northern Saskatchewan, north of the treeline, and with your head spinning with questions of *aboriginality* and what it might mean, that word that you made up because you needed a title for your address to the conference, and as someone who writes poetry but thankfully places little consequence in the term poet, you have the land to turn to.

If I am as suspicious of the appellation poet as I am, it is because of popular images of the poet. This image has perhaps been as open to just as many misconceptions as *Indianness*, *Nativeness*, or now *aboriginality*. People who write poetry are as guilty as anyone of perpetuating popular images of the poet. Listening to writers of poetry talk about what they do, at times one cannot help but be struck by their hubris in suggesting that they are acolyres in some secret society. Sometimes writers of poetry suggest that poets are born or created by mysterious forces, not made; and as such, poets have access to a way of seeing and being that others, who are less privileged, do not. Margaret Atwood alludes to this popular misconception, tongue-in-cheek, when she writes of her own becoming as a poet: "The day I became a poet... . I was walking... . I was scuttling along in my usual furtive way, suspecting no ill, when a large invisible thumb descended from the sky and pressed down on the top of my head. A poem formed ... It was a gift, this poern a gift from an anonymous donor, and, as such, both exciting and sinister at the same time" (Atwood 1998: 2). Unfortunately, perhaps, the writing of poetry is usually neither a gift one is born with, nor a gift bestowed upon one by the mysterious forces of the universe. It is, at once, something much simpler and much more complicated than this.

Someone who writes poetry does not regularly have communication with the unseen forces of nature and the universe; neither do most Aboriginal people I have met. Poets do not create the language into which they are born, nor do they create the meaning that may arise out of the ways in which they string the words of a particular language together. Someone who eventually begins and continues writing poetry, for one reason or another, is born into a language and eventually learns that language and, perhaps, others. Similarly, they are born into a world of meaning that precedes and forms them. As a writer of poetry, it is true that I am not the sole source of the writing, nor can I in any real sense claim ownership of the poems that I write down and sometimes read to people. This does not mean

that I have secret and exclusive access to hidden realms of being, seeing, and communication. However, I write in a language that precedes me about a world of being that also precedes me. The poems then are not my own; I have no ownership over them; and I cannot control what they will say or how they will live beyond me. I am born, I look at the world around me, see what is to be seen and hear what is to be heard, and then I attempt to translate that nonverbal experience into the human language into which I was born. In that sense, then, I am a conduit, a facilitator, an interpreter. There is little magical, mysterious, or miraculous about the writing of poetry – except the common human experience of being born into a world of language where we attempt to make sense of a world much larger than ourselves, much larger also than our collective expressions within the cultures we create in response to the world around us: the landscape.

Let us return to the land, then. In attempting to answer questions about my own writing and the *aboriginality* of this writing, I often turn to the preoccupation of the writing with the land. My own writing tends to begin and end with the landscape and all of its creatures, human and otherwise. If people read this writing and see in it something that might be termed *aboriginality*, then so be it. Much of the writing I do begins not with a concept, but rather with the landscape. My father, Irish and Norwegian, made his living in the forestry industry; his parents were homesteaders who made a living from agricultural uses of the land. My mother is a Cree woman, born on a northern reservation and raised on a trapline. My grandparents and my parents derived a living directly from the land. I, on the other hand, make my living by reading, writing, thinking, and teaching. However, I grew up understanding that the food I was eating came directly from the land, if only in the sense that it was paid for by money made from exploitation of the land's resources. Also, while growing up I found my solace in the natural environment that surrounded me and the community I lived in. I grew up aware of the immersion of human culture in the larger landscape, and the dependence of all human culture on the landscape.

In my book *Under the Night Sun*, there is a series of poems, entitled "Moonsongs," which begins with the following quotation: "...she knows/what weight of body is/knows her flesh/(her cells, her magic cell)/mutters its own dark songs" (Lundy 1999: 79). The suggestion here is that the Moonsongs are sung both to the Moon, and in another sense by the Moon. The Moon has her own voice and language: she sings her own songs, articulates her own dreams and desires, joys, and sorrows. These poems, then, are an attempt at translation: as one might translate a poem from Cree into English, I have attempted to translate the Moon's singing in to the language I write in, which happens to be English. This is not to suggest that the Moon's voice doesn't have its own legitimacy; I believe it does, and my attempt at a translation is a gesture of respect toward that voice as well as an invitation to the reader to listen for the original language.

I would like to say that this kind of writing grows out of the land as naturally as the weeds and flowers and trees – but it doesn't. As someone who writes poems, my job is to listen to the singing that surrounds me, and then attempt to translate that singing into the language in which I write. This business is perhaps more tricky than translating from one human language to another because, obviously, the language of the landscape is a non-human language, yet a language nonetheless. When I address an audience and they ask me why I write, sometimes I tell them it is because when I stand at the edge of a valley, like the Qu'Appelle,

in the early evening and especially in the early fall, the light that is particular to this place and time transforms the landscape or, more properly, transforms our way of seeing. Often people will not understand this and will ask what I mean by the light transforming the landscape or our way of seeing. At that point, I cannot explain. If I could explain what I mean in ordinary language, then I would not have to write poetry; I would not feel the need, the compulsion to write. Because I cannot explain what I mean in everyday, conversational language, I need to write a poem that attempts somehow to translate the experience into the language I speak. If the attempt at translation fails, if my use of language falters as it approaches the experience – as it often does – then the failure is mine only.

Scott Momaday has said that "The American Indian has a very long experience of the North American continent ... a kind of spiritual investment in the landscape, and because of this experience he is able to think of himself in a particular way, think of himself in relation to the land, and he is able to define for himself a sense of place, belonging" (1990: 91). This is a way of thinking of oneself which, in the words of Tomson Highway, "is specific to our landscape" (1990: 353). When I attempt, then, to describe the voice in which the poems I write strive to express themselves, I have to say that the voice often locates itself in relation to a landscape: it is a voice attempting to translate an experience of the landscape, a voice that is born into a language and into a world larger than itself, a voice trying to translate what there is to be seen and heard in a multiplicity of voices that are so much larger and articulate than one writer's voice could ever be.

I have heard it said that poetry is about *passionate attachtment* to the world and/or *ecstatic attention* to the world. I grew up in northern Saskatchewan, within a five minute walk of the confluence of three rivers: the Fir, the Etamomi, and the Red Deer. This is where I first studied the confluence of the mind/soul/spirit, the body, and the landscape. Whenever I needed solace or refuge, I sought it among the animals, birds, rocks, plants, trees, and waters that were so nearby. These creatures, all of them animate and articulate, have been and continue to be the greatest influence on my writing. The living landscape, the earth and sky, and all of the creatures to whom this is home, have taught me passionate attachment and ecstatic attention. My job as a writer is to look and listen, to hear the trees and rocks and water singing, as they always are.

If there is something in the writing that I do which approaches *aboriginality*, which makes sense to people who come from cultures that were born and nurtured, grew, were colonised, but survived, and have begun once again to prosper in this place, then, I believe, it is a sense of belonging, a sense of being at home in a land that is much larger than the human homes we articulate in our specific languages and cultures. In a book entitled *Living in the World as if it Were Home*, Tim Lilburn writes that "these essays consider what might have to be done in order to live in the world as if it were home" (1999: xiii); and the particular place he writes of is this prairie landscape which is the focus of this book. Outside room where I am writing, the land and the sky, inescapable facts, yawn like a great maw, one that might swallow us all whole as easily as it belched us forth. Nevertheless, when Lilburn asks, "How are we to be here?" and "How are we to live in this world, this place as if it were home?" I want to answer that since we are here, there is no other place that we can be; since we are here, there is no other home that we can have. This is our place, this is the only home that we can have: if we are to belong, as we must, if we wish to continue this experience of all that is more

than we are individually and collectively, then we must live here, in this place – not as *if* it were home, but with the recognition that it *is* home, the only home we have.

In his book *River in a Dry Land*, Trevor Herriot writes of "nostalgia ... in its original sense, [as] a yearning for home" (2000: 2). He goes on to write that "If nostalgia works strongly upon our modem sensibilities it is because we are yearning, not so much for 'home,' whatever that may be, as for the time when we were still on speaking terms with our landscapes. The sharpest pangs of wistfulness we feel are the intimations of a former communion with a meadow, a valley, a stand of trees, a river the land that knew us. Something in our blood remembers, yearns hopelessly for lost lifeways and the time when we were native and kin to the soil, the water, the creatures, and the plants... . Hope resides in a better nostalgia one that leads not to sentimental fraud but to ... [a nostalgia] that sounds within our hearts an ethic that has nothing to do with the claims we stake upon the prairie and everything to do with the claims the prairie stakes upon us" (ibid.: 3).

Herriot goes on to write that "Although it is clear that we have done much to reduce our conversation with the land to a monologue of demands and plunder, and although we do not have the mythmind of the original listeners, we do have other faculties the will, imagination, thought, emotion, and memory ... with these we can again listen and respond" (ibid.: 13). Whether we are Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, this place, this landscape is the only place we have to call our home; it is home to each of us as individuals and it is home to all of our diverse cultures, whatever conceptions or misconceptions we may have of one another. And it is this place, this landscape that offers hope of our arriving at self-understanding and the understanding of others. If there is anything in my own writing that approaches aboriginality, not as misconception but as being-at-home-in thislandscape, then my hope is that it is the invocation to look and listen and offer up a willingness to learn from the landscape, with its many voices in a multiplicity of languages. Although Aboriginal cultures have a prior historical and cultural claim to this landscape, the passionate attachment or ecstatic attention that can and must make this place home is open to all who are willing to look and listen. As individuals and cultures, we must have the courage and the will to do so. Whatever choices we make, it is true that, in the words of Pat Lowther, "The land is what's left/after the failure/of every kind of metaphor" (1977: 36).

References

Atwood, Margaret. 1996. "Waterstone's Poetry Lecture"; Online posting: //utl1.library.utoronto.ca/www/canpoetry/atwood/write.htm. 31 January 1998.

Durnont, Marilyn. 1993. "Popular Images of Nativeness." In Jeannette Armstrong (ed.), *Looking at the Words of Our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature*. Penticton: Theytus Books.

Herriot, Trevor. 2000. *River in a Dry Land: A Prairie Passage*. Toronto: Stoddart.

Highway, Tomson. 1990. "Interview." In L. Hutcheon and M. Richmond (eds.), *Other Solitudes: Canadian Multicultural Fictions*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

King, Thomas. 1990. "Introduction." In *All My Relations: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

Levertov, Denise. 1978. "Fantasiestuk." In *Life in the Forest*. New York: New Directions Books.

Lilburn, Tim. 1999. *Living in the World as if it Were Home*. Dunvegan: Cormorant Books.

Lowther, Pat. 1977. "Coast Range." In *A Stone Diary*. Toronto: OUP.

Lundy, Randy. 1999. *Under the Night Sun*. Regina: Coteau Books

Momaday, Scott. 1990. "Interview." In Laura Coltelli (ed.), *Winged Words: American Indian Writers Speak*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.

Theatre and the Pictograph

Floyd Favel Star

This essay is about some work I have been involved in. It will talk about the general issues surrounding native theatre, art, cultural politics, and cliché. I am writing from the point of view of an Indian person who grew up on a reserve, and who speaks Cree. I choose to call myself an Indian, rather than an aboriginal or First Nations person: to be an Indian is to accept one's position in the world as a colonized person whose people signed a treaty with the British Crown, and to refuse a federally funded identity constructed by politicians and academics.

For some time now 1 have been working on the relationship between theatre and the Plains Indian pictograph. These thoughts stem from the need to develop a contemporary theatre methodology based in the sources of this country, yet workable for all peoples and cultures. It is not good to isolate ourselves: we must be a part of this country on an equal footing with everybody else. Most importantly, I want to bring forward our unique ways of thinking and of doing art, and to contribute to other streams of thought that make up the ecology of world art. Art should be complex and we should have a variety of paradigms to work from, not only a few from one or two main colonizing cultures. Even though globally we are not many, we need to include our cultures too – in my case, the Cree people of Western Canada. Our cultures: that which was taught to us by our parents in our poor government houses, along the banks of a creek, by the kerosene lamps – that inheritance which we clung to even though society told us it was not valuable.

It is of value to create bridges between the old and the new.

To think, to work: it is a way of paying homage to the elders, to the dead, and to our memories; and one needs to be rigorous and cruel in order to do justice. I use the word cruel in the spirit/esprit of French director Antonin Artaud: to be cruel is to not be deceived by illusion, but to see clearly and lucidly, and to be rigorous in the execution of one's thought and art.

I work in the theatre; my trade is the art of making shows. I give credit to all of my teachers who gave me a means of supporting myself and my family, who gave me a trade that works with the different cultures of the world.

Floyd Favel Star heads the Takwakin Performance Laboratory, a theatre company based in Regina that develops performances informed by world cultural influences. He has worked extensively across Canada in theatre, dance and radio.

Photo courtesy Bruce Dawson (1994)
For centuries, the pictograph has been an important method of First Nations storytelling. This scene, which has been interpreted as possibly a dance, battle, or birthing scene, was carved at Writing-On-Stone, Alberta.

Theatre is a series of narrative images presented live on stage, and the pictograph consists of narrative images which tell a story painted on animal hide. It is obvious that their meeting point and shared characteristic is that both theatre and the pictograph tell a story, and that both use narrative image. So, what is their relationship and how can they influence each other?

My premise was, How can the technique that created the pictographic system inform the theatre in regards to the composition of the body on stage, as well as the montage of scenes, images and text? Can the pictographic system become the model on which to build a system of composition and montage for the theatre?

I was helped in this thinking by the Soviet film maker of the 1920s and 1930s, Sergei Eisenstein, who observed in one of his essays the imitation by the Japanese of European ways of filmmaking. He asked, Why did not the Japanese develop their own montage system based on their already existing systems of montage and image, like in the Haiku? I stole this idea and replaced the haiku with the Plains Indian pictographic system.

The pictographic system was developed and used by the Plains People. It is primarily a means of recording events important to the tribe. An image would be chosen by the painter, either alone or in consultation with others. This image would then be painted on a hide and receive a narrative action title, like "The year the smallpox arrived by a boat." This image would act as a catalyst for other stories and events concerning the tribe.

The pictographic system indicates to us a way of perception and a way of articulating this perception that is not naturalistic: it is not a direct reflection of life, but an artistic rendering of real-life events and actions. The theatre is not a photograph of life but it is art arrived at through the filtration of images, thoughts and feelings into forms and composition. This is fundamental for the theatre as

Courtesy L. James Dempsey
Decorated cowhide robe.

we seek ways of working that can break the tyranny of naturalism and the direct imitation of life. We seek for a supernatural way of working that expresses the truth of the situation more profoundly. It can be a way for the power of our imaginations to transform the theatre at a fundamental level. It changes the theatre from the roots, from the sources, where the mind begins to articulate the creative energy into form.

Where does this creative energy come from? This is like asking, "From where do the eternal solar winds originate?" As Indians we say our energy comes from the Spirit World, from the Great Mystery.

It can be a way to express our "Indianness" beyond mere dressing and style – going beyond putting buckskin and beads on stage. This is a style of art which passes as innovative native theatre or dance today; in native theatre and dance, there are a few clichéd images and themes around which our creativity revolves. For example, to create a mystic mood in native theatre you have the performers walk in slow motion. There is evocative music playing in the background, and perhaps dim lighting; or the tribe is communally dancing in peace and togetherness; or shamans appear and there are bones and rags hanging from their regalia. The basic theme is that natives are possessors of spirituality and that we lived in harmony until the white man came. It is a formula; it is viewing the world in black and white.

In cliché art we are not being equals, but we are playing the savage, or the educated savage, the sauvage sauvant, and we are creating either guilt or a false sense of nationalism. Theatre has gone to bed with the politicians. Art arouses enigmatic feelings that we cannot explain, like the strange longing we feel when hearing a Chopin Nocturne. True art turns us to the Good: it is not political and cannot be put to the service of cultural politics. However, when we are working with cliché, usually the artist is serving not the Higher Powers, but fulfilling a cultural agenda concerned with money or position.

I want us to go beyond this. Perhaps we need the tools to help us unleash our imaginations so that the images we create on stage could express the originality, contradictions, and the power of our people. The tools we are using now are leading us to the above-mentioned image and theme. We all seek ways to liberate ourselves and our people. One of the ways is to construct working paradigms that benefit us, and not further oppress us, and which do not allow us to simplify our culture down to amateurish imagery.

I am not trying to create a synthesis or fusion between native and non-native ideas; but rather I am manipulating and constructing a methodology from my own Indian sources. I am adapting the theatrical medium and using it as a vehicle for

our creativity. Fusion and synthesis in culture and art are false ideas, they mislead and cause confusion among our people and hold us back. We are unable to think clearly.

We always make a choice to be from either this source or that source. Let us look at our province of Saskatchewan and test this premise. For example, the Métis say they have their own language, Mitchif, which is a blend (fusion/synthesis) of Cree and French. This is not true. If you study and learn Mitchif you will understand that the language is rooted in Cree syntactic structure and sources, while using French nouns; it is a way of talking Cree to French traders whose knowledge of the Cree language was deficient or lacking. Maybe a Cree woman would go to the trading post and say to the storekeeper, "a notay atawayan le mouchoir I want to buy a handkerchief'," *mouchoir* being the French word for handkerchief. Essentially they are speaking from a Cree source using French words, so Mitchif is not a language of its own, created by synthesis and fusion. This is not very different from the Cree spoken nowadays by younger Cree people, only they use English. Maybe I am going to the post office, and I say, "Post Office *a we totayan* – I am going to the post office": does this create a new and unique aboriginal language based on a fusion between Cree and English? No, of course; it is only Cree being spoken with English words.

These are some thoughts on the spirit of my research and its questions; I hope that they can be of value. I deliberately chose not to talk technically about the mechanics of applying the pictographic system to the theatre. I chose instead to talk about the possibilities: my quest is ever-flowing, open-ended process.

A Glimpse into the Past Through the Eye of Everett Baker (1893–1981)

Finn Andersen

Without a doubt, it is safe to say that one of Saskatchewan's most unheralded photographers is a fellow by the name of Everett Baker. This unassuming man was born in Blue Earth County, Minnesota on January 29, 1893. He emigrated to Canada in 1916 and settled in Aneroid, Saskatchewan. At that time Everett was the area representative for the R.C. Barnum book company, of Cleveland (Ohio), and was selling door to door, or more appropriately farm to farm, *The Peoples Home Library*, a three-volume set of practical hints extremely useful for individuals living in isolated or remote areas. Eventually Everett left the employ of R.C. Barnum and took up farming in the Aneroid area.

Over time, Everett Baker became actively involved with the cooperative movement, serving as Secretary for the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association, as well as working as a Constituency Organizer for the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. In 1924 he was instrumental in establishing the Aneroid Cooperative Association, serving as the store's first manager, a position he held until 1935, when he joined the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. There he was employed as a Field Man, and worked in this position of recruiting and assisting Pool members until his retirement in 1957.

The exact date is not known, but sometime around 1939 Everett Baker began the process of photographing the everyday scenes he came upon in his travels as a Field Man. The film he chose to use was Kodachrome, the 35 mm colour slide film recently developed by Kodak in 1936. In taking these pictures Everett had the innate ability of getting people to be themselves in front of the camera, so that the images he was able to capture reflect the true form of everyday life in Saskatchewan in the 1940s and 1950s. When looking at these pictures three thoughts come to mind. First, we see in colours that have remained astonishingly fresh those scenes from a recently vanished world which we have been conditioned to imagine in black and white, thanks to the then prevailing medium in photography and cinema. Second, it is truly amazing how natural and relaxed the subjects appear to be: for the most part there is nothing staged in the images

Finn Andersen is Executive Director of the Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society, an organization dedicated to the gathering and preservation of the province's social history.

taken, so we can identify with and relate to the subjects as if they were our next-door neighbours. Third, Everett Baker clearly had a flair for composition, and was able to give to the majority of his photographs an artistic bent.

One of Everett's duties as a Field Man was to recruit individuals to join the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool; and one of the means that he used in drawing people together so that he could talk to them about the Wheat Pool was to provide slide presentations on Saskatchewan. From this we can infer that Everett had a two-pronged reason for taking the images: firstly was his genuine interest in learning about and capturing on film the social aspects of Saskatchewan life; secondly there was his perception of the potential of photography as a marketing tool for the Wheat Pool. Whichever reason was the prime motivator is impossible to know, but what we do know is that because of these interests, Everett Baker provided a truly unique legacy of Saskatchewan's past. His efforts were recognized when in 1957 he became the first president of the newly formed Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society.

Everett was thus not solely interested in the current social aspects of Saskatchewan, but also in the province's history. In this regard he was intrigued by what life was like for the original inhabitants of the area, and spent considerable time and effort in meeting and learning from old-timers and elders throughout the province. This interest in Saskatchewan's past can be seen in the self-published book entitled *Bits of Saskatchewan in Color – Trails and Traces of Rupert's Land and the North-West Territories as seen from 1940–1955*. What was intended to be a series of books, but unfortunately only saw the one issue ever published, demonstrates Everett Baker's keen interest in our heritage and the important role that aboriginal peoples have played in defining who we are as a province.

It is not known how many images Everett actually took, but just prior to his death in 1981 he donated a collection of 10,000 images to the Cooperative College of Canada. This collection eventually found its way to the Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society in Regina. Fortunately, Everett was very meticulous in providing annotations on each slide jacket: these notes supplied the date, location and a brief description of each image taken. This detailed annotation has allowed the Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society to catalogue the collection some fifteen years after Everett's death. As indicated above, the images he captured reflect on the broad spectrum of Saskatchewan life in the 1940s and 1950s. They provide us with visual information on: streetscapes, from small-town Saskatchewan to the province's major cities; farming life and the equipment it required; grain elevators; schools; families and associated social events; the homes in which people lived; industries then operating in Saskatchewan; and of course the natural beauty of the province.

Aboriginal people are an integral part of these many themes. I invite you to muse over a very small sample of Everett Baker's slides: there are twenty-four of them, and they span twenty-four years from 1941 to 1965. In contrast to the black-and-white photographs of North American Indians taken by Edward Curtis a half-century before, these reflect scenes of local Aboriginal life in all their genuineness and simplicity. They are Plates 1 through 24 in the colour insert.

Everett Baker was a white man; yet he showed a keen appreciation of the land on which Aboriginal cultures developed. A poem that he wrote will serve as conclusion and as fit accompaniment to his photographs:

Some people hurry home
When sets the sun,
'Tis then I like to stay
As darkness falls,
As shadows climb the hills
And golden domes
Quickly are gone.
Then comes the deeper twilight
'Neath the hills,
Objects grow less distinct,
But 'gainst the sky
A silhouette of magic pines appears
Hills, fair and near
Quiet, the nearer trees,
Amid a silvery sheen,
Moonlight, or starlight,
O'er the lovely scene.
"Silence" is nature's mood,
No boisterous calls,
But only muted notes
Of birds, or men,
Cradles in darkness,
Or the musical waters
Of the swift mountain stream
And they, subdued.
Should I go round the world
In search of cheer,
When nature holds
Such loveliness
So near?

(from *Poems From Southern Saskatchewan, 1867–1967,* edited by Edith M. Roycroft)

An Interview with Sheila Orr, Artist

Heather Hodgson

The drum evokes sounds of primordial speech, the rhythm of the cosmos, the human heartbeat. For First Nation peoples, it calls, it gathers. For all these reasons, Sheila Orr's painting, *Hand Drum*, seemed an appropriate logo for "Aboriginal Peoples and the Prairies," a conference co-convened by the Royal Saskatchewan Museum and the Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina. The conference was a multi-disciplinary event, indeed the first of its kind in Saskatchewan, and it drew Elders, linguists, historians, government employees, playwrights, artists, musicians, singers, and storytellers together for three days in March of 2001.

The drum has been a durable symbol for the first peoples of this land. Its sound, shape, and materials inform important aspects of aboriginal culture. It is as round and as whole as the cosmos, and the very materials from which it is made provide links to the age-old First Nation connections with the land and the animals upon which Aboriginal and Métis peoples depended for almost everything.

Orr's *Hand-Drum* (plate 25) embodies the sense of community so important to First Nation peoples. While it began as a single abstracted image of a drum, Orr later added a venetian blind handle which she beaded into a drumstick, thereby giving the painting a three-dimensional effect. A community of silhouettes surrounds the drum and brings it to life.

At a glance, the small hand at the centre of the drum is innocuous enough; but its colour, its slenderness, and its apparent vulnerability attract the eye and prick the conscience of viewers. Its small size suggests that it might be the hand of a child or a woman while its crimson colour suggests associations not only with power but also with blood. For First Nation peoples, blood is power – a power that is respected and treated accordingly. Indeed, much ritual surrounds the symbolic features of blood. Yet the crimson red of the hand in Orr's painting also cannot help but resonate with other memories: memories of battle, memories also of the blood spilled when this continent was colonized.

Sheila Orr was born in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and raised in her mother's Cree and Inuit community of Chisasibi, one of the nine reserves north of the

Heather Hodgson teaches at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College and works as an editor for Coteau Books and the Canadian Plains Research Center.

James Bay in Quebec. She is of Cree and Inuit heritage on her mother's side, and of Scottish heritage on her father's side. In 1980 Orr enrolled at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) in order to pursue her interests and hone her skills in First Nation art. Having already learned traditional bead and quill techniques from her mother, she chose the SIFC's Indian Fine Arts program, where she broadened her knowledge of the field of art generally and cultivated her own skills as a traditionalist and painter. Orr subsequently received degrees in Indian Fine Art (SIFC) and in Arts Education (University of Regina), and continues to credit those First Nation artists (some of whom were faculty at SIFC) who influenced her own creative development as a First Nation painter. Orr, her husband and four children live in Regina and now call it their home.

Over the last two decades, Orr has been both a student and an instructor in the Fine Arts department of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. Her work has been exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout Saskatchewan since 1988, and in that time she has also fulfilled the roles of curator, visiting artist and consultant. As her passion for art-making is still divided between traditional works of First Nation art and contemporary painting, and as she moves easily among multiple mediums (quills, claws, oils, acrylics, photographs, pails, beads and canvas), she has been appropriately described by curator Lee-Ann Martin as a "contemporary traditionalist."

The Last Bingo (plate 26) is a memorial to Orr's mother, Gracie, who although bedridden with cancer, continued her passion for bingo via the radio. In this work, Orr used fragments from her mother's handkerchiefs to form the quilt, and she used her mother's bingo chips in the stained glass windows.

Sheila Orr and I spoke about her work and her art-making.

Heather Hodgson: *Can you tell me more about the exhibition of which* Hand Drum *was a part?*

Sheila Orr: The *Hand Drum* painting was part of an exhibition at the Mackenzie Art Gallery, entitled "Inspirations." The former curator there, Lee-Ann Martin, invited me to exhibit my work in the Studio Series. The painting at first was quite minimal, with only the drum floating in the centre. It went through some changes because I felt it was missing something. So I included a drumstick made from a curtain rod, and beaded it. This gives it a three-dimensional effect. Then I included silhouettes of the people sitting around the drum. After all, what is a drum without a drumstick and people? I also painted a hand at the centre, hence the name *Hand Drum*. This is the first oil painting I have done for a while, and although I prefer to paint with oils I switched to acrylic after having babies because I started taking my kids to my studio. I intend to use oils more often in the future.

HH: *How has your work evolved during the years you've been painting?*

SO: In the past few years I have been developing works based on ideas that occur while I am busy doing something like washing dishes or jogging. Something will stick in my mind until it becomes a work of art. It may not be created for quite some time but I eventually express that particular idea: for example, *The Last Bingo* was an idea that developed while I was playing bingo, and I knew that I wanted to make it into a painting. My future intention is to apply more of my ideas that relate to having lived in a remote community: youth, love, and of

course humour will inform this work I intend to do. Sometimes I just start a technique as an experiment with materials, and it leads into a complete work. And at the moment I have a few works-in-progress that range from mixed media to paintings to beadwork and quillwork. I have a forthcoming exhibition at Sâkêwêwak, and the theme for it is "being young on a northern reserve." So a lot of those pieces will reflect the 1970s, and tentatively my title is "Sex, Quills and Rock'n'Roll."

HH: *Is the bridging of past and present motivated by something specific you want to say about art?*

SO: Over the years my work has blended some traditional techniques with paintings because I felt it was a good way to redefine beadwork and quillwork as fine arts and not just as crafts. I of course was confronted with the opinions that these two techniques are "primitive" or "crafty," and were not considered to be art; but I felt differently. At the same time, while not *all* traditional work is a fine art, there are some beautiful works created by our ancestors and traditionalists today. While European artists were painting, we were quilling, painting and making pottery. In our case, all of these art activities involved everyone in the communities — not just the aristocrats. My thinking is that art is for everyone.

HH: *You integrated photographs into some of the installations in your recent show.*

SO: Photography is quite minimal in my work as I have only used photographs of my relatives, children, and my mother. Many of these I took as a teenager. I had a boyfriend who was the local artist on our reserve when I was 14 or 15, and we had plans to attend the SIFC Indian Fine Arts program together when I finished high-school. Sadly, he committed suicide. I was so young; but had I known better, I might have sensed the seriousness of his sadness. He was a great artist; his name was John Napash. He had ordered a Canon AE 1 camera through the Bay before he died. As it arrived after his death, the manager phoned me to let me know it was in. I, in the meantime, had won the Carnival Queen concert so I purchased the camera with the prize money. It was then that I started to take a lot of photos: slides as well as black and white images. Unfortunately, the camera was stolen from my apartment, and since then I haven't taken as many photographs. I do, however, have a few that I intend to use in my forthcoming exhibition. Regarding the blending of different mediums, I can't seem to help mixing materials together. For me it's like life in a sense — there's a whole mix of things — and this is what is reflected in my art. That's what "Poutine" means: you know, those French fries with cheese and gravy...

HH: *What inspires you to create?*

SO: I have an inner feeling that inspires me; I can't help it. It is something that I do best. But growing up I have had some influences; and firstly it was my mother, her name was Gracie (Snowboy) Orr. She was so talented at everything she did — always sewing, beading, decorating fancy cakes; and of course she dedicated herself to us, making sure that we were taught traditional and cultural ways of camping, fishing, and preparing food at camp. If it wasn't for work and school, she would have probably lived at the camp for a lot of the time. Our place is called *Moosjunbauk*, which means "The Place with Spring Water." It is along the shore of the James Bay, just south of Chisasibi. It stills belongs to my family and is easily accessible from the community.

HH: *Would you say the land and your community were big inspirations for your art?*

SO: Yes, there are many inspirations for me from there. I believe that one can be influenced at an early age, as we are so quick to learn then. Each day brings new teachings for a child, so there is the beginning of my inspirations. Our camp didn't have phones, TV, electricity, or running water. My mother would go to church the odd time, but she never made it a part of our lives. We were near the camp one day, picnicking and berry picking, when she said to us, while pointing at nature all around us, "This is our church, we don't have to go to a building to pray, nature is our church." I was just a kid, but I'll never forget that day. I used her quote in an exhibition at *Wanuskewin*, so this is an example of an inspiration that I've kept in mind. It doesn't matter how old I am because I still experience nature like when I go home; so I can't help but be inspired by my upbringing. At the same time my father is Scottish, and although my parents separated when I was six, it was through my father that I learned other things in life: for example, my English is good. My father's accordion playing and sense of humour were always present in our lives, and both he and my mother were open with each other and did not shut us out either. They never fought, so I didn't even know they were officially separated till I was twelve or thirteen!

HH: *Where do you get your ideas for some of the other subjects you address in your art?*

SO: Some other inspirations come from the Inuit background in my family. My maternal grandmother was an Inuk from Great Whale River. She married a Cree, but Inuktitut was my mother's first language till she was five or six and then moved to Chisasibi. Her dad was from Chisasibi and was a Cree-speaker, so my mother switched to speaking Cree then. My grandmother Mina was the first generation of mixed marriages between the Cree and Inuit. They used to feud over territorial issues. So sometimes you will see some Inuit imagery in my art.

HH: *What are your goals in bridging the old with the new when you make art?*

SO: For me it is a way of integrating traditional with contemporary methods of and making it into "art," thereby releasing it from the trivializing connotation of "arts and crafts." The blending of themes, cultural components and inspirations creates a certain texture that I like, and furthermore I can't seem to just bead or quill: I have a hard time just doing one thing as my mind tends to wander, and I end up mixing these techniques all together.

HH: *Who were your teachers? How did you develop your skills as a beader and in working with quills?*

SO: I started beading when I was six years old. My mother gave me and my sister our own bead kits. She was always making something and was a master at embroidery. Her work was well known in the region. She used to sell beads from out of the house, but never made any money from doing that; in fact she would sell the glass tubes for the same price she paid for them! There was also a ladies' sewing group that met in our living room twice a week, and the pieces they made were sold in our basement. All the proceeds from these sales went to DIAND. Eventually she stopped doing it, but I still remember the laughter during those sewing sessions. Besides that, my mother also worked full-time at the residential school, but would sew and bead early in the morning before going to work. When she completed a piece she would have us look it over to see if we could spot any imperfections, but we could never find any. If I ever wanted to know how something was made she would explain. As I grew older I realized that beads were a

trade item and not really indigenous to First Nations, so I asked my mother what we used before we had beads and embroidery thread. Her answer was porcupine quills, and caribou and moose hair. Although she did not practice with these materials, I knew she knew what was what. Quillwork was something I learned later on in life when I was at university, but I never forgot my mother's teaching and I was determined to learn the older styles and techniques. I learned by observing and using visual patterns, and I began examining works in the museums and storage rooms. Just by looking at a work I can figure the technique quite simply. I knew that beads came after quills, so the beading and stitching techniques stemmed from the quilling. Many of the stitches are quite similar. I started with small projects, and today I am still learning new stitches. I once made a fully quilled bag, and I am now in the process of creating another one with floral designs for a commission. The quillwork I find quicker to do once everything is ready to be used. For a long time I did not realize that there were books on quillwork apart from the ones that are so confusing to read. Some of these books have reduced beading to mathematics, when it is really easiest to learn by looking and using one's imagination. So my main teachers include my late mother and now myself. Another important resource to me is the old works housed and displayed in museums.

***HH:** Who were some of your other influences in traditional art?*

SO: Naturally my mother is my biggest influence in traditional works, but there were also all the works that I have seen in the museum storage rooms; these works are the ones that have the aura and essence of the "old" feeling. I sometimes wish that I could go back into time and meet those artists and creators of such beautiful quillwork. In many cases, we don't know who they were, as the names were lost; but they would have to be my inspirations as well.

***HH:** What about the influences on your painting?*

SO: With contemporary works there are a few who have influenced me, but not one in particular. They range depending on the stages and years of influence, but my favourite artist among them is Bette Spence (Ruth Elizabeth) because of her ability to be herself and combine her humbleness and love for nature in her work. Bette also created beautiful poems that went with her paintings; and interestingly enough, she created serene loving pieces despite the fact that she does not have very good eyesight. I once told her that the more she loses her eyesight the more powerful her paintings become.

I also really admire the late Arthur Shilling – I love his loose style and textured surfaces. He was a great artist, an influence for many young artists in the early 1980s, so I was saddened by his passing. I often show his video "The Beauty of My People" to my students. Now there was an artist who could paint and not even hesitate with his brush; he was not afraid of the line, the colour, or the elements in art. True artists do not hesitate: we just go ahead and make art. I also admire Edward Poitras' work; and I have known Edward for many years as he was one of my instructors in the early 1880s. He was a great teacher, always teaching us about ideas; he was the first to teach me what critiques are, and I was only 16 or 17 at the time! I was so anxious to face the world of art. Edward made good comments about art in the classroom, and he never threw his work in our direction. When I see his work today I am still intrigued by his conceptual and sometimes minimalist approach. His quiet personality and "loud" art intrigue

me. And although he is primarily an installation/multi-media artist, I also enjoy his paintings. Many of my influences have changed, but I must admit that I continue to prefer the Indian artists from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

HH: *In your classroom, how do your connect the work artists create across the country with the influences put upon them by the land or the region they live in, or even the animals from those areas?*

SO: When teaching about distinctive styles of a particular region, I refer to the environment in which the culture lives. The environment usually reflects the traditional patterns and designs that may appear in a work of art as dominant. For example, naturally on the northern plains where the buffalo was the main source of food, the culture evolved around that way of life. Therefore those animals and everything involved with their hunting was eventually reflected in the art: from a cave painting of a buffalo to a pictographic hide painting of a hunt, to an oil painting of a buffalo hunt by, say, Sanford Fisher. Horses played a big part in the life on the plains, so you find more horse imagery in this artwork here than you would on the North West Coast. The art there, of course, expresses peoples who are a sea-going culture, so you see lots of whales and fish dominant in the art. The Inuit express their culture with the imagery of caribou, seals, fish, and so on; and they are also known for their ability to create works involving transformation legends. Often the Inuit work expresses the climate in which they live, whereas the Woodlands peoples paint moose, beavers, flowers, "Midewin" imagery, and so on. So we all have the background of the land we live in that influences us still today.

HH: *What influences the contemporary art made by indigenous artists here in Saskatchewan?*

SO: I have a friend who is of the Plains Cree culture, but who figures that it is North West Coast art that is what he wants to do. I have reminded him of his roots in an effort to suggest that his work would be stronger if he focused on where he and his ancestors are from. He has taken some of that advice and continues to create wonderful works.

HH: *How do you inspire your students to draw from their culture when they are creating art?*

SO: One of the assignments I like to try sometimes is to have the students research in more detail their own cultural heritage and pick something from the museum that they may like to try and make; or we research through slides and I assist them on that project. Indigenous artists on the plains continue to portray some or all of the Plains icons: horses, eagles, buffalo, head dresses, pow-wows, and so on, as these are what is handed down to them. Whether it is a 14-year old, a second-year university student or an established artist, they will always subconsciously portray something of their culture. Today's influences may include new media like digital prints, computer techniques, installations; but if their heart and belief are of the plains, it doesn't matter what the medium is, it will have a sense and feel of the plains.

HH: *How do you help them to find their own style in the work they do?*

SO: I teach my students that they can make all the eagles they want, all "The End of the Trails" they want, all of the wolves in the sky they want. My assistance to them comes from my ability to teach them the different ways they might achieve their ends. I do not encourage them to make a copy of another artist's painting,

but rather I encourage them to create their own original work, although it will still resemble plains imagery if they are originally from the plains. They soon realize they are influenced by their surroundings and by the land. If they are established artists they tend to blend many ideas, using issues even from abroad. Emerging artists, on the other hand, stay closer to home, and that is okay. This creates a balance in the art world.

HH: What about your own work Sheila?

SO: I always look forward to creating more works, and I have a few projects to complete right now. The themes vary, but all of them will have a First Nations essence with a mixed-media approach in the various techniques I employ. I like working on projects of various sizes from the very small (earrings) to the very large (paintings), depending on the piece and the content. However, my main material continues to be painting on canvas.

HH: You experiment with new materials which send out interesting but sometimes ambiguous messages your work. I'm thinking about the purple foil chocolate candy wrapper you used as a baby's papoose. Can you comment on that?

SO: I like to use a variety of materials to create an intriguing visual texture. I think there is no limit to what can be used in the making of artworks. I like to include a mixed- media piece as an assignment for the students, so that they can experiment and learn about the endless amount of things that can be made into art. It also loosens them up, and makes them feel comfortable with new materials. The idea of blending traditional and contemporary materials is a way of mixing the old with the new: for example, beadwork on painting. There are a number of artists who have been doing this for a long time; I have been experimenting this way for about twenty years. I have always enjoyed taking a chance on the results in order to discover how materials might work together. Traditional arts have always blended mediums: quills and hide, beads and tufting, and so on. I like to mix those ideas and techniques with contemporary pieces, such as painting. I just like the results.

HH: Thank you Sheila.

Elders' Roundtable

Maria Campbell: We'd like to begin with the opening prayer.

And now I'll start with Willie Hodgson. Willie is from the Ahtakakoop Reserve, and she lives here in Regina...

Willie Hodgson: Moose Jaw.

M.C: I'm sorry – Moose Jaw. I just learned that I was going to be monitoring last night, so I don't really have a backgrounder. Irene Jacques is from Standing Buffalo, and Marie Louise is from...Marie Louise Rockthunder is from the Piapot Reserve; and Jean Okimâsis is from White Bear...

Jean Okimâsis: Okimâsis... Okimâsis

M.C: Okimâsis? Okay... from the White Bear Reservation; and Beatrice Lavallee from Piapot. So those are our guests this afternoon. And we are going to start with Irene.

Irene Jacques: Thank you very much. Honorable Elders, people. You all know where I am from so I won't have to introduce myself, but it's so nice to see many of you here. I thought there would be many other students, I thought maybe they want to hear about our ways from way back, our culture; but I guess everybody knows everything already, so we don't have too much of our own students coming here. But anyway I'd like to share what little bit I know. I've always said not one Elder knows everything. So we all have our own way of thinking and know the things that were passed on to us by our grandparents. I was very fortunate to be raised with my grandparents until I was taken away to go to residential school so I can't tell you too much about the lands other than what I went through when I was home with my grandparents. But I know things were very, very hard the way I seen my grandparents. You know, my grandparents were very smart people. I remember seeing them in their big garden, and I used to be with them, and when the garden vegetables were all grown they'd tell people to come – help yourselves, take whatever you want – and my dad was the same way. My dad worked hard on the land, he used ten horses: six horses, and then he would change four of the other horses. And I remember they were...they say "the dirty thirties," it was just terrible, I was small but I remember: it was just dusty, dusty it was so dry, yet my dad was working out in the fields and then at the same time he was fishing. I think some of you people here would know, my dad used to fish,

so that was our main food. Sometimes we had to eat fish everyday, and I didn't say, "Oh no, not that again!" – not like kids would say today, they're so spoiled today, you know. We were just glad to eat because we were always playing, making our own fun outside, you know, making mud cakes and what not; and we'd be hungry, so you know, we'd gladly accept what was put on the table by my mother. And my mother worked hard also. In our houses we had dirt floors and I remember my grandmother making a little broom out of some bulrushes, branches she'd picked ... and you know, it's amazing, walking on that ground you loosed up dirt too, so we'd go along and sweep that gently and gather that up and then at night, I don't know how my mother done it, but she made some matt-esses out of straw. It must have been very hard, but that is what we used to sleep on. And then in the wintertime it'd get very cold, we had a wood stove ... it'd go out during the night but we'd sleep like that. And I noticed we'd be really healthy: we were out there and there were no colds ... you never heard of anybody having a fever. And sleeping on that dirt floor, we never picked up no germs... But anyway, I remember that for shoes we had moccasins, moccasins that grandma made for us ... and we had to save them: we had to go to the doctor or someplace, that's the only time we wore our moccasins – until much later, when we got running shoes. But then we had to save them so we were running out there with no shoes, no socks, and ... it was very rough, you know...at that time I didn't think, I knew it was just our way of life... People were poor, but people were very kind to one another, respected one another. But today, it's a different lifestyle. Those are the things I remember till I was taken away to residential school, and that part I won't talk about now – too painful... But I sure miss my grandparents a lot. They were my great teachers because all they taught was their language, most of the language, just what I can speak, and I have a big dictionary at home of the different dialects – Dakota dialects to guide me. And life in those days it was really hard, and imagine my grandparents, they lived in a teepee before, it was very, very hard: my grandmother used to tell me, and sometimes still today I wonder how these people survived. But our creator put us on mother earth and also showed us how to live, what to use; they were guided by our mother nature, 'cause I remember I still hear today our non-Native people say, "Oh, the Indian people worship the sun, worship the moon." We don't do that: we just look to them because they're guiding us. I remember being in the garden and my grandfather would say look up there, "It's dinner time," he said; he'd tell my grandma, "We have to go and eat lunch, so they knew by the sun what time it was; we didn't worship like we were in the Catholic church, we had no statues, it didn't bring us nowhere... But anyway I don't want to take ... there's other speakers ahead of me ... but I just wanted to share something here that I came across. We are all called to be teachers. Our history is rich with the knowledge of life, as the Creator intended it to be: seek it, learn it, share it, then the gift of wisdom that our ancestors left behind will be yours and our children's future. I just made a little note here. Honour our dreams: they are messages from the spirit world. I was just going to give you a little example. My husband was quite sick, and I knew a lady here in town, she's a teacher, and I hadn't spoken to her for some time. She phoned me one day; I'd stayed in Regina for a whole month with my husband and I got home, and she said, "Oh, you're home. I haven't heard from you; I was thinking about you for a couple of days, and then I had a dream of you, so I just had to phone." I said, "That's nice." That dream was warning her

to look up her friends, to see what had happened to her friends. I told her, "You made my day today, because I went through some rough roads. But I'm alright now." Our dreams ... we have to think of our dreams, they mean something. But thank you all for coming to listen to us. Thank you.

Willie Hodgson: I come from Ahtahkakoop or Sandy Lake ... about 10 miles from Spiritwood. I am an Ahenakew, a direct descendent of the Ahtahkakoops. Deanna Christensen has a wonderful book she has written; it would make Ahtahkakoop my great-great-grandfather. And I'm a Pratt from Gordon's reserve on my father's side: Charles Pratt, the Anglican missionary there, he's my great-grandfather. And again my maternal history: my three Ahenakew brothers married three Ermineskin sisters from Hobbema, Ermineskin reserve. And my grandmother's mother was a sister of Poundmaker, so whenever I'm speaking in public, it's such an honour for me to say that my ancestors were such worthy people. And we as the generations coming after them hope to always honour them. I speak Cree, and I understand Saulteaux, and I function like a gramophone needle so I've been a little worried about how much time I take... But I am also not standing like this lady did, this Elder, because I am a bionic woman: I've got a brand-new knee, and I can't take all this weight yet. And as we talk about our history I realize we are talking about our connection with the land, and I horrified myself because by the time I finished making my notes last night I had close to eight hours here. So I won't do that. But our connection with the land is so incredibly important, and I guess I don't know if I've ever had time to reflect before how closely tied we are to the land. Looking back at just my personal history – and that's all I can speak of because I can't speak for others – is a value in our culture: we don't speak for the whole, we speak from our experience and knowledge. I was born right by the lake – about right from here to that post, I was told. I'm grateful to my mother that she didn't drowned me...but it's a beautiful, beautiful lake. Somebody told me once that the earth from which you were born is where your soul lives forever, and I'm always taken back, there's a sense of something different that happens to me when I go home: it's almost like my whole physical, spiritual person relaxes because I'm home. It takes on a different time, a different space. I think that I am so tied to the land, but I'm also tied to Moose Jaw because I have three kids that live there, and my daughter who lives here; so you know mothers, I'm one of those cling-on mothers. I call the reserve my spiritual home, and Moose Jaw my earthly home because I'll have to live there because I have grandchildren, which is incredibly important to us as a culture. And in looking at being tied to the land, being born by the lake in a tent, close to the earth, with, I can imagine a fire; and the old ladies coming in their long black dresses and their moccasins, and their little rubbers on top of their moccasins, and their shawls, always black...and their little kerchiefs that were tied like this...in the front, and their long braids. And they would come to do their delivering, and then off they'd go back to wherever. We didn't have doctors: people were just simply cared for in the home. I can't remember anybody coming when I was a child; the doctors came later. My grandmother told me... she used to tell us that before the missionaries, when someone died they would wrap them all up with personal belongings, foods and different things and they would build a scaffold, and they would put the bodies up there, and the bodies would simply go back to nature. Grandmother had many, many stories ... wonderful, wonderful stories. And she taught us a lot of things ... she taught us how to snare rabbits, how to

Photo courtesy Heather Hodgson
Back (left to right): Wilna Hodgson, Irene Jacques, Maria Campbell, Beatrice Lavallee
Front: Marie Louise Rockthunder

catch rats, which she ate...Now we could never do that; in fact, we couldn't even stay in the house when she was cooking her little rats. She also taught us how to catch gophers. We would get going ... but when I was a kid you would get a cent for a gopher tail. We would drown them, or we would whack them on the head and stun them and then we would quickly cut their head off and hold them upside down. We'd get them home, then we'd build a fire with our parents' help; then we would singe all their hair and we'd scrape them off nice and clean, gut them, and take the little tail for sale, and then we would cook them. You have no idea how delicious a gopher is... Beautiful. I recommend it if they are still just eating grain; of course the grain is polluted now, but they are probably one of the healthiest little meals you ever had.

Audience Member: They are so full of chemicals now that you don't want to go near them.

W.H: OK, you don't want to go near them ... no tails for sale. The land was everything for us. We picked berries ... we picked lots of berries. We planted our gardens, we lived off the land. In the fall it was nothing to have six to eight hundred, or a thousand cork sealers of canning that was from picking raspberries, cranberries, blueberries, I said I wouldn't say it, strawberries, raspberries which were all very delicious. There were even hazelnuts around us, and we'd pick them; they were green, and by Christmas time they'd browned off and they were ... the skins fell off. We could just live off the land. Well, we had mostly deer, not often a moose, and I don't remember having elk. But lots of prairie chickens, ducks, partridges...I was a shooter because we didn't have any boys in my family; in fact, that's why I was called Willy. My father lost his arm when I was nine, and I became his helper for three years, and then he changed my name to Willy. I think he just wished I was a boy. And he used to take me out on the land to cut pickets and sell them; we sold them for, I think, 50 cents a piece. And I remember being out once, and we were picking berries, and I thought Dad was on the other side picking berries; and I was just talking up a storm with him, picking my berries,

and I look over and it was a bear! But he had taught me how to slowly back away, and the bear was too busy with his saskatoons and didn't bother me either. We did lots of silly things, and I love to think of when I had the guts and the determination to think I was a real hunter. Me and my cousin Grace Ahenakew were on our horses one day, they were clumsy old farm horses, and we saw a cougar and we chased it; we chased it for a mile and a half, and I am so grateful to the Creator that we didn't catch it! But, you know, I know we were poor, but we had such an incredible amount of family, such a wonderful extended family. In fact, when I go home for one of our gatherings, like there will be two hundred people at a family gathering, and by the time they've finished hugging and kissing you, you're in a permanent pucker. There's a lot of love and there's a lot of sharing. We shared everything. As for the land, we... I just can't think of enough things because I'd take six hours, but you know, we'd experience things like grass fires. No one can know what a grassfire is like unless they are there. It's moving towards you at a speed that is incredible and makes a lot of heat. I lived in what would be considered today – I don't know what it would be considered, probably a house ... a full house? But for my memories it was a wonderful house. It was made of huge logs, I guess like a cabin; and then it was finished, in all of those crevices there was a mixture of manure and sand – silty sand – and hay. They mixed that all up and they put it in; and then they whitewashed it. And mother or dad would build little things that she would put flowers in. And so I always think what a wonderful, wonderful home that we had; I can't think of it as being poor. We made everything, our table, our bed sheets, our clothes...all of our clothes. We had shirts, petticoats, sheets... I can remember mother also made us very, very baggy underpants; and one of the worst memories in my whole life was going up to the front of the classroom and having to write on the board, and I reached up and my elastic went and I got "waddled." And of course, the guys, the little boys were so cruel they killed themselves laughing...I just about died. And our boys were so bad. We had a toilet chair for the girls and a toilet chair for the boys; they had taken a board off of the side where we sit, facing the door... Did you do this? You're looking kind of guilty...

Audience Member: No!

W.H: Well, I just could go on for ten hours ... but I'm not going to. I'm going to say that everything that I wrote down, to my surprise, had to do with the land; and it could mean that we've lost something. I can't believe that a lot of kids think that milk comes from cartons, that they've no knowledge of where all of our nourishment comes from: they just think you get it packaged, and somebody heats it and you eat it. And I think it is also unfortunate that we've lost the art of preparation of our staples, because when I look back I can't think of anything that could be taken away from us and we would not survive as we have for centuries before – we were so self-sufficient. I was at the brink of the oral tradition, and for the kind of memory and teachings I've had I am most grateful to the Creator and my family, and especially to my grandmother. My grandmother was so special. She had probably only about ten percent sight, and she was still wanting to go out and snare rabbits. One day we heard her coming, she was like a little tiger ... swearing, from a mile away, that she'd been skunked. Mother built a fire and stripped grandmother and burnt all her clothes; she made deadly swears right through. Wonderful, wonderful memories of my grandmother and all the teaching that we experienced. My mother was taught in the school here, and after that

she learnt to be a nurse, and so I often remember being there as children while they were teaching her and she was helping... I think she was a natural nurse. I have a wonderful bunch of memories. I don't see my life as having been too raw; there was no discrimination because we never traveled out far enough to experience it. That does not mean it was the story of the rest of my life. I have a terrible sense of direction, and I have been lost in all kinds of places; it's often been said that if I'd met Columbus he'd still be lost. And an Elder from the States was talking about Columbus having discovered the Americas; he said that he didn't know he'd discovered the Americas: he thought it was India, and that's why they call us Indians...and he said, I wonder what would have happened if he'd found Turkey? Thank you.

Mary Louise Rockthunder: I'll be 86 this fall. I had three sisters a long time ago. My parents here ... all my sisters passed away. I didn't see my sisters, they passed away. And I can tell you one thing, I don't have no brain ... no brain here. I can read a little bit, I can write a little bit, I can talk a little bit; but when somebody talks in here for high words I'm stuck. Not my fault, that's my mom. Me too, I loved my mom; she was blind, and I had to look after her. And to go to school – I was 8 years old, so I had to go. 29 miles away, at Lebret. And we went; and I went to sign my name, and my dad signed my name, Mary Louise Rockthunder. And I went to sleep with the girls. I liked it. I liked the group, the school, and I went to sleep. The next morning I went to go eat with the girls, and a nun here, she looked after me, and showed me where to go. She was watching me here. And I look, and see my dad coming, and the principal and the police; and one fellow was talking to my dad in Cree, to help him to talk. You know, a high school boy to help him like that, standing here. And my mom here, she went too; she was talking. And next she's coming and she takes my hat. And I went where I had put my clothes. She told me, I think, to change, and I changed and she took me where my dad is standing. "I have to go?" and my dad looks at me: "My girl, you have Cree, you have to go home. You have to look after you mommy." I see my mommy in the back there. My mom, she was crying, she didn't like to leave me behind. And I come home: that's why right now I have no brain. I can write a little, can read a little, I can talk a little, not too much. Somebody talks to me here, high words, I'm stuck. I have to ask him, What do you tell me? You know, that way I'm poor right now. I'm poor, but I can talk. Any place I can go, any place I want to go, there's a meeting I have to go. Any place. And right now is my grandchild here, she asked me to come here. Now I come here, I think all of you are here. Anyway, when I was small I would have to go to my grandmother's, I would have to go with her all the time. When we went on a hill, in the spring time, the summer time, we went to eat – wild fruit, you know, strawberries, raspberries, everything! My grandmother here, she helped me. And I got a cough, I got a cold, and she had an apron on her, and she looked. And water here, a bottle, she would put it here on the hill, and we'd sit down. "Hey, my girl, you have a cold. I'm going to help you," she told me. And she took a wild onion and cleaned it with the apron here; and with her pocket knife she cut it small: "Here, try to eat it." I had to eat it, as we had no cough mixture at that time; we had nothing, no cough mixture, a long time ago. And I took the wild onion with the water here. Boy, I don't know how it went down. Kinda hot here. And the 15th of July, she took a knife, and went off with me and my aunt and her girl; we went into the bush. We cut sticks at that time. We have juice now, on the 15th of July, on a

stick here. We drink it – oh, it tastes good. That's Indian juice. A long time ago we were poor, but we made it; I made it. Right now I'm 85 years old: that's why right now I have arthritis. Grandma also made bannock. She'd put grease and onion here, from her garden – no spray, nothing, just rain water. No medicine – just water, rain water. We had gardens, nice ones, not spoiled. Not like now: we put a garden and we put spray, some kind of medicine here; we spoil that garden, that's why people get cancer or asthma. So with my kokum, we would cut bannock and put grease and onions here, and salt, and water. "OK, grandchild, eat." And I would eat. Kind of strong, here, but I'd eat it and at the same time drink water. But she helped me for my germ here inside. It helped me lots, that onion. I can tell you I can still eat onion raw: I cut it, and salt it, and eat it. All of us, my girls and boys, we do that. I told my girl, I told my boy here, "Try to eat some onion, here: that's good for you. Good for your blood." That's why a long time ago we were poor, no cough mixture. Just that way, Indian way. That's why I go to meetings all the time, I try to tell people here to listen to us of a long time ago, we were so poor. Now, I told my grandchildren here, "Try to go to school, try to know something. Look at me, I'm stuck anyplace, I have no break." That's good for young girls and young boys to go to school, to know something, to sit down, there's a paper here to write, or something. Not a long time ago, so hard to make money; we had to cut pickets, you know, and we'd sell it them for five dollars, that was lots of money, then. Package of tobacco, that was ten cents; matches were five cents; and cigarette paper, five cents. A long time ago. Right now you have $100, it's not enough for boots here, $100, not enough. You have to make about $250 to get new boots. But a long time ago we had moccasins, we wore blankets. We'd make moccasins and mitts too, we'd put strings: that's no money to spend. We were warm. And a towel here, that made a scarf. A long time ago, we were poor, but we managed. Yeah, that's why I like to go to meetings like here all over I go; I like that. To tell young people, young girls how a long time ago we were so poor, but we made it. See? Right now I'm 85 years old. Oh, there are a few things wrong – my eyes, and right here too, and my stomach too, and my knees too. I had to go to the doctor for my knees, and we also put some Indian medicine. A long time ago, my dad here came from the States; that's the place I went last fall, me and my son-in-law and my girl, we went to see where he was from. I can talk Saulteaux and Assiniboine, too – I can talk. My grandma was Assiniboine, that's the one I went with all the time. I can talk Cree, too. I can talk the white man's language, but not too much. All of you, thank you very much for listening. Thank you.

Jean Okimâsis: Well, I'm not really supposed to be up here, but she wanted me to sit beside her. But when these ladies were talking I sort of started remembering about a lot of things in my own childhood – like, you know, the gophers. My little grandmother used to do that. But we used to also play with those gophers, there were so many of them and the boys used to snare them with a string and just play with them, and then when they got tired of them, they'd take the string off and let them go. But I remember one time my youngest uncle on my father's side, he said, "Hold on to this": he was going to take the string off and he told me to hang on to the back of the head, but I went a little bit too low and then the gopher turned around and bit me! And it was hanging on to my finger and I was going like this, I was really little – I was so scared I didn't cry. But he let go and I still have that little scar on my finger, you know. But that kind of amusement, I

guess you know was something we did, we had to make our own amusement. Just a few years ago, for instance, my auntie, my mother's sister... (The reason why I'm saying "my father's brother" or "my mother's sister" is that we have different terms for each of those in Cree so that you know exactly whose sister and whose brother it is.) But anyway, my mother's sister was very sick; she passed away a few years ago. But at the time her grandchildren were complaining, "Oh, we're so bored," and this and that. And she said, "You know, the children are so spoiled: you can take them to town and buy them toys, they get tired of them in a few days, so they always want something new." She said, "Do you remember how as children we used to play and say "creek, creek!" and we would all run downstairs, you know. I don't remember when it was, I was so little, but at my grandmother's place they had an upstairs, and we'd go up there and someone would say "creek, creek!" and we'd all run down. She said, "These kids can't do that; they don't have any imagination." But I thought about it later, and I mentioned it to my sister, my older sister, and she said, "Oh, you know what, the house was haunted: we never used that upstairs. They didn't use the upstairs – it was bare. And it had nice floors, you know, everything. But we never used the upstairs because it was haunted, and we all slept downstairs at my grandma's. And the "creek, creek" was, you know, whatever it was that was haunting the house. It was what we were scaring each other with. But things have changed, you know, times have changed. I was a real tomboy, then. We used to play with my boy cousins, and ride horses and climb trees and dig tunnels in the snow banks. They don't do that anymore. We'd plant these nice saplings or young trees, and we'd move them like that and then go on to the next one, grab on to the next one, and I used to try to keep up with the boys. I kept up but they used to wrestle, and I'd be right in there trying to wrestle them down, and I kept up with them. But it is certainly a whole lot different now: I can't imagine what these children would do if they were taken back to that, those years where we didn't have toys. We didn't get any toys. We went to town on a wagon, and we'd get there all dusty and it was a miserable time, although it was nice to go to town and see this and that. But we didn't get toys, and we didn't get welfare – nobody got welfare in those days. We had to do this and that. We had big gardens, and we didn't put shoes on: we just ran around barefoot when I was supposed to put my rubber boots on. One time I had to hoe the garden, but it was so hot and the rubbers were so sticky that I took them off. And I thought, "Mom is in the house quite a ways over there – she won't know"; so I was using the hoe and I cut my foot with the hoe. Well, I wasn't gonna go crying because it was my own fault if I didn't listen. So what I did – and a few years back I heard something about this – I stuffed some mud into my foot where it was bleeding, you know, I kept putting some mud on there and hoe some more. And then it would still be bleeding, so I'd stop and put some more mud in there, nice cold mud. Tricky, wasn't I?. There are so many things that I'd like to talk about... I went to school on the reserve till grade eight; I did my grade eight there. First we went to the Protestant school, which was about a quarter of a mile away, and then somehow or other they got us a teacher to teach at the Catholic school. We took classes in the church that was about a mile and three quarters away, so we would have to walk over there. Then they did get a school, a Catholic school, and then that was three and a half miles to walk, so it was quite a ways. But we walked every day, every day of the year: raining, snowing, cold – we trekked, all the way through three and half miles

away, just because my parents were Catholic. And there was this school a quarter of a mile away that we could have gone to... The influence of the church was just tremendous, you know. Of course it took me back east to meet them, the ones from the Protestant school; and they were kind of mean to us – threw us in the snow bank or something, or tricked us, just to make life miserable for us. And then I went to school in Lebret, and that's where I graduated from. We were poor and everybody else said that we were poor, but we didn't know it: we didn't know that we were poor because we didn't see anyone else that was well off. Everyone else was just as poor as we were. There was that United Church minister, my grandfather used to look after her, he was her janitor sort of thing. He'd go and look after her horse and her garden, and this and that. And he got paid for that and she used to have people send old clothes, second hand clothes, you know. Those clothes were so – this is ridiculous – so unpractical, you see: pretty silk dresses, things that you wouldn't want to ... they were just unpractical. Yet you would see people wearing these clothes. But my grandmother tried to get sweaters, old sweaters, and she'd unravel them. I remember having to sit there and hold this yarn, watching her unravel the wool and roll it up into a ball; and that's what she'd use to knit socks, mitts, scarves and toques for us. And then by the end of winter, if our socks were worn out she'd get some more sweaters and she'd unravel the sock from the toe down until she got to the ankle and then put another color of the yarn and make them new again. So we had new socks again. I remember very clearly when I first got my first real snowsuit; it was black and orange. Oh, I hated it because of the colours. I just hated it. And my cap was a sort of a little bonnet, black with an orange stripe. Oh, it was horrible, I just hated it. But it was a real snowsuit, a real store-bought snowsuit. And I was always the last one to get these things, because in our culture the older ones are more important than you are: anyone older than you, you respect. My father used to farm a little bit, and yesterday when I was visiting a friend, we talked about people and their farming. My father used to farm, and I remember at the agency they had this long shed and that's where my dad would take his grain. They had little compartments for each person's farming: this was my dad's, the next one belonged to so and so, and that's where they put their grain. But he couldn't sell it unless he got a permit. He couldn't sell pickets unless he got a permit either, and I remember I used to have to run over to the agent and ask him, "My dad needs a permit." He was selling so many pickets, and he was home busily sharpening the pickets because he would get more money if they were already sharpened. But that's the way it was, you know: we had to live off the land. I too remember the hazel-nuts: we would take all these nuts and put them in bags and eat them later for treats in the winter. We also used to dry saskatoons and chokecherries, crush the chokecherries. My grandmother used to make pemmican, what the white man calls pemmican. It's delicious, really delicious. My grandma would have to sit there and pound it and get it to be almost the texture of tobacco, something like that. And then mix it with grease, lard, sugar or berries, and pat it into a pan. Oh, it's good. But that's my story. And I have a lot of stories this lady has told me on tape, and I'm working on it, I'm writing them out. And she didn't tell you half of what she told me.

Beatrice Lavallee: I just ask my grandma to come beside me as I tell my story. Every one of these ladies is a little bit of everything they said. When this one was talking about hazelnuts, I even dug out the one I carry with me. At the back of

where I live, my grandma used to have her house there; one of my brothers, Alphonse, lives there now. But as many of you know, in our culture we have what we call the little people. The little people brought things into the house, like hazel-nuts. Alphonse and Dorothy didn't go out to pick these things, so they were surprised to find them in a few different places in their house. She gave me two of them, and I carry them around with me. Somebody was talking about being a tomboy - well, I grew up with five brothers, I have five brothers living at home, so I had to be tough. I started wearing blue jeans as part of growing up with all these guys. I use to wish I had a sister; you know, when I started having sisters-in-law, I was so happy! I took up for them whenever my brothers got rough with them; I took up for the girls - never mind those guys. But anyway, I too had a very loving grandmother who raised me until boarding school, like many of the children in my time who couldn't speak a word of English. When I first went to school it was in 1937. Boy, what a scary place! Didn't understand a word. There were all those fathers wearing black robes, and gray nuns with long black dresses and the bonnets on their heads: what a scary place that was. When I was young, right off the start I remember going to this... I guess they call it chapel, or church, whatever. I remember being on my knees for a long, long time and hurting my knees, and not knowing what I was saying or what everybody was doing: it was all very foreign to me. Up to the age of seven I grew up with the sweetgrass and the pipe and our spiritual ways; we were all living very spiritually. I grew up with my grandmother, watching her and what she did. She was a medicine woman. I grew up watching her dig from the ground, and offer a prayer and tobacco for the medicine that she was digging. I watched her do that and anything else she did. She used to paint little sticks; she'd paint them yellow, white, red, green. I'd ask her, "Why do you do that, Kokum?" And after painting them she used to put them on the side of the hill, as an offering to the bear spirit. "And why the little mirrors?" So she said, " The little bears when they wake up they can play with them, can see themselves." Now this is what I grew up with, that kind of prayer, that kind of understanding, that kind of loving environment, with my grandmother. My mom and dad and my brothers, they lived in a different house, and I lived with my grandmother. We went for walks – she'd be talking and I'd be listening. We'd be looking at our snares: we used to trap weasels; and muskrats to – they're delicious, I agree. All those things, you know, you watch. And in the morning she'd pray, all the time. She'd make a fire and then she'd start to pray; she'd been giving thanks for life. That'd be it, you know. She'd say something about her grandchildren. My mother is an only child, so I didn't have any aunts or uncles or anybody. But we always had a lot of guys around our house. When we went to Regina with the hay – we used to have three loads going to Regina – then me and my grandmother we would go in a little buggy with the one horse, because we had to go along and cook for the guys that were bringing these three loads of hay. And that little permit that allowed you to come all the way to Regina to sell the hay. We went to the market square and waited; used to get hungry sometimes. You went to sell your hay or your wood or your pickets. You couldn't do anything, you couldn't leave anything. Someone would come to the reservation every month and count the head of cattle you had, and how many you're supposed to have, and you'd better have them all. It was tough, I guess, but that's the way it was. It was that way for everybody, not only for the people in Piapot; I'm sure it was that way for those other people too from other parts of

Saskatchewan. But my grandmother, I missed her terribly when I went to school; and how scary it was for me when I started understanding the language! I started hearing the word "pagans": that's what the old priest used to call us. He'd say, "Pagans, pagans, you're all going to go to hell." Oh, that used to scare me. Very scary. You see, my grandmother never got baptized. I did – when I was a baby, I guess. But my grandmother never did. In fact, every summer I would come home for two months, and I'd try and get her to turn Catholic; I wanted her to get baptized a Catholic too, because I didn't want her to go to that place and burn. But during that time when I tried to convert her my grandmother used to tell me of the French, the English, and all the other nationalities, that "They too were given a way; it's all right, it's their way. And this is our way." But, "No, Kokum," I'd say, "You're going to go to hell; you're a pagan, Kokum, you shouldn't be praying the way you're praying." Boy, I was mean to my Kokum! Every year I did that to her, every year I'd come home. My brother Alfred used to say, "Don't cry, don't cry... We're going to baptize her anyway on her dying day." He used to say that to me. But I'd never quit. She was telling me one time about old men, long ago, who were very wise; they had powers to know, gifts to know. And she was telling me about this old man that received the laws on the hill, and I said to her, "Oh no, Kokum, that was Moses"; but she said "No, no, no." But anyway, I guess this old man had said to people at one time that we Indian people were also given four laws: the law of love; the law of respect; the law of sharing and caring, like we all do and hear lots about today; and the other one is to be truthful and honest. Four laws. These are those guys' Ten Commandments: maybe they need ten, I don't know – we only need four. I can laugh about these things now because I've realized who I am and where I'm at now. I can't be the other way because it was not meant for me to be that way. I've got to accept who I am and what is given to me, as an Indian person.

One day somebody phoned my up, and this was in 1967, in October. It was Eleanor Peter And she said to me, "What are you doing, Bea?" "Oh", I said, "I'm staying home, waiting for my kids to come home from school. My youngest one just went off to kindergarten." "Oh," she said. "Would you like to work? I'm looking for an Indian woman who wants to work." "Doing what?" She said, "Do you remember there used to be a Credit Union League of Saskatchewan?" Well, anyway that is where I ended up working, the Credit Union League of Saskatchewan. Boy, I wanted to show those people I was the hardest worker there – reliable, the most reliable Indian. I worked my boots off. Then one day this girl, who was a bookkeeper, said to me... Ali was her name; nice, pretty blonde lady...she says, "Slow down Beatrice, slow down, you're making the rest of us look bad." That was the start, and I stayed there for quite awhile. I was there for over four years. And after that it was the other part that was... My first husband was a drinker, drank all the time. Worked all the time as well – at the potash mine out there in Balgonie, this was years ago. We had five children, but he drank; and as a result of that I got to act very crazy because of his drinking. I didn't join him but I just did stupid things to pay him back, you know. It was a very dysfunctional household. But I went to this program called Al-anon, and I have to talk about Al-anon, cause that's where I started getting a direction in my life. They made me think about understanding God? I started to go back to the time when I was seven: that's where I felt comfort, that's where I'm OK. "Kokum," I used to question her, "Kokum, where are you going to go when you die?" "Oh,"

she said, "It's going to be nice where I go: I'm going to see my relatives, everybody – nice." "What about that fire, Kokum?" "No", she said, "we were not given fire, we as Indian people were not given fire." I asked some other old people at that time – they're all gone now – but I did ask them the same question: "Where are you going to go when you die? What about your sins?" They told me that if there is something that they didn't take care of while they're still here on earth, that they'll carry it for awhile, but in time this too will go away through prayers, through offerings, through the feasts. That's why it is important that we have feasts: we feed them, it's the thing to do. Sometimes you know of a relative holding an empty bowl, you know you'd better get a feast going: he is telling you something. But anyway, Kokum told me that there was no fire, she told me that for awhile she'd carry. In my culture as well we have ceremonies which I have attended for the past seven, eight years, and which have really given me a deeper understanding, a deeper meaning, to me and my culture. There is one lady here who has attended them also: Irene. She knows what I'm talking about: where the grandfathers come to talk to us and heal us and answer our questions and dreams, or whatever we might want to know. And they're very, very real, and they're very, very kind. And I think this is what my grandmother used to tell me about a long time ago, when she told me of these ways that were given us as Indian people. There are some people who are gifted; they're given this gift to be able to help people. And they for sure work with the Creator because it is the Creator that works through them to help the people here. We've asked a lot of questions through the grandfathers in the ceremonies I go to, and they are always so kind and willing to let us know what we're all about, what our purpose is here. And one of the messages that I've been hearing lately is, "Grandchildren, grandchildren...go back to your ways, go back to your ways, go back to the ways of your ancestors." They even said one night: "Who ever comes to your door, share everything that you have, even if it is the last thing you have in your cupboard...share." You know that was one of the laws that were given us. For them to say that to us, it must mean something: to remind us again of our ancestors and of what our ancestors did. This is how we survived all these times, and we are still here. You know I liked what the lady had to say, that if she was the one guiding Columbus they'd still be lost. I like that. But anyway, I think I'm going to stop here unless there is anybody with any questions. I'm going to slow down and rest here; I can sit down for awhile.

M.C: I'll open the floor for questions now, if anyone has anything that they would like to ask, or comments they would like to make...

Audience Member: I was really impressed by the discourse of the elders. But I wondered if all elders are women, or where the men are?

Beatrice: Well we had one, but he is not here; his name is Alec Wolfe. But he was here a couple nights ago; I guess he got tired.

Audience Member: So, to be an elder you need lots of stamina, and it's only women who have that: is that what you're saying?

Beatrice: You know, I spoke with Alec twice – Thursday and Friday, I think it was. But in my culture it's always the male that goes first. So I let him speak first. But the other night at the hotel, I was wishing that he'd be the gentleman and let me speak first – go western and let me speak first. But he didn't. We still had to stick to that: him first, me second.

Audience Member: It's very misunderstood – not only among the whites but also by our own people. To become an Elder; you have to be named by the community; you can never name yourself. An Elder does not necessarily know everything, but you may have a skill in an area where your community has a need. And it has made me very, very sad to see some of our young people – like around thirty-five to forty – have Elder cards and go around consulting. I often think, "Who named them?" because our old way was to be recognized by the community. But they say, "I'm an Elder," and I think it's sad. I think we need to re-learn our old ways.

Elder: Yeah, I've been asked that question many times, "How do you get to be an Elder?" Well, the way I understand it, we have to earn that in the community. I had one lady come to me, thirty-nine years old, and say to me, "I'm a grandma." And I said, "That's good, welcome to the grandma world, but you still have lots to learn." You have to earn that respect, it's the way you live, the role you model, you know? I see some elders today, they're drinking; and the next thing when I meet them, "Oh, I'm an Elder"! We're confusing our young people. Sometimes I talk to the grandchildren; I try to tell them where I could get a hold of an Elder and I name that gentleman: "I can't go there, he drinks." Of course I don't live in Regina, so I don't know what's going on here; but this is what I hear from our young people. So it's kind of sad, and sometimes I feel bad. I wish our people were stronger. I mean, years ago our elderly people were strong people: that was how they survived in their everyday lives. But today it's different...and I find that today it's very hard to be an Elder. I tell people, "You know, I could be very loud like this lady – dye my hair, wear makeup and go drinking." But I have to think of myself, respect myself. I'm an Elder and I have to live that role model. It's very hard. More so today, we need more elders to guide our young people. A lot of our young people are going astray. I went to a funeral, in Poundmaker, where young people had committed suicide... out of hopelessness. I talked to a grandma and she said, "You know, I have a lot of grandchildren but I don't even know them. I go play a lot of bingo every night, seven days a week, I go play bingo." And that's the very time we should be with our grandchildren! You know, when some of my grandchildren come to my house, I sit with them; we eat and talk. Three of my grandchildren came the other day and stayed over night. In the morning: "Grandma, cook some porridge"; so I cooked porridge. And I sat there eating, talking about a few things, you know. My granddaughter, Angel, said to me: "You know, grandma, when I get big I'm not going to do drugs." I looked at her and said, "Where did you learn that?" "From school." "I'm glad you're listening. But remember this," I said, "You're only little now. When you grow up you're going to see different things...you're going to learn different things.You can not grow up by passing a lot of things because we are going to do it later on." So that was fine, and then I come to her brother and he looks at me with his big eyes and he said, "Grandma, I'm going to drink." I looked at him: at least he told me the truth! "Like your dad," I said, "Just drink a little bit." Then it comes to the other granddaughter, and she talks about doing drugs and drink. All I said was, "You are so young to say this, because you don't know, you have a lot of growing up to do." Yeah, that's all I wanted to say. Thank you.

M.C: Does anybody have any more questions, any comments?

Audience Member: I was just going to make a comment about Elders. Apparently some people are quite insulted by the word "Elder", because there are denomi-

nations where there are Elders – the Mennonite, or the Mormons, you know. And there was someone, he used to tell us, "I'm not and Elder – I'm just old." You know? So he was old, that's all. His wife was considered an Elder, but he was never approached. That was his explanation: "I'm not an Elder – I'm just old." So as they explained before, you are considered an Elder by others; if you're an Elder they start approaching you as an Elder. Then you know you should start minding your manners, I suppose. But if you're considered an Elder that's a great honour, because you must have something there that they appreciate.

Audience Member: I just wanted say that I'm a grandmother every day. I've got three grandsons that live with me. One nineteen-year-old, who will be graduating this year, he lost a year – it's a long story. Teachers in St. Augustine School wanted to put him on Ritalin about six years ago. But I went the culture way, I went to the shaking tent and I went to the prairies for doctoring for my grandson. You know, he never had to take one Ritalin pill; and he's graduating this year. He's also been working at Safeway since last November, and he's working today. So we don't have to go that other way: there are alternatives for us. We just have to look them up. And the other grandson, Jacob, he's nine years old. I lost my daughter four years ago; she's left me with three children, my seventeen-year-old and a nine-year-old. And Jacob was one of these kids with dyslexia, I think it's called. I took him to a doctor to be tested; he came out of there with flash cards, trying to teach him I guess, to see things. The teacher now writes me little cards: "Jacob got a 100%," "Jacob got 92%," "Jacob got..." But there again, I went the other way: I went to a ceremony, made my offering of cloth and tobacco. I asked the grandfathers to doctor him; they said, "Don't stop here, grandchild, go to contraries: contraries have lots of power too." You know, he doesn't even wear glasses now. He used to wear little reading glasses before, but now he can see. And now he makes his t's the way he's supposed to make them. I just wanted to share that. I am a grandma everyday, I do have my grandchildren all live with me.

M.C: Any more questions? Any comments?

Elder: Marie can I have one fast comment. People sometimes say that our language has been overrated. I have heard that. You know, when we speak our language it's a vehicle back to our culture, our morals, our values, everything. We have to have the language back because when you translate, it takes on an artificial kind of interpretation. And even our spirituality is housed in our language. The other saving grace is our sense of humour: without being able to laugh at ourselves, we would never be here today.

M.C: I still have someone who wants to make a comment.

Elder: We talk about tobacco. I know we always say, "Use it but don't abuse it." I myself smoke, but not that much. I'll smoke in the morning and in the evening for spiritual purposes. And that goes for all native people. They have a connection with the tobacco, to the spirit world. That's why I feel very sorry when I see all the jails: they ban smoking, that's too bad. Because they are sort of infringeing on our spiritual rights. "Smoke, but don't abuse it." I smoke only for spiritual purposes. I've heard people saying, "Oh, these Kokums shouldn't be smoking, they're not setting a good example"; but these are young people, they don't know their ways. Don't forget that our ancestors, who are gone before us, they liked their tobacco. And I remember my grandmother, who died when she was one hundred and six; she said to me: "My grandchild, when you're eating, remember

me. And not only me – all of us. Put some food away." I'm sure some of you have heard that. "And tobacco: when you're smoking, think of me." You see, this is one of our ways, our traditional ways.

M.C: I guess that brings our afternoon to a close, and I want to thank all of you for being here. It's always difficult. I'm not a moderator. I worked with Elders for many years, and one of the things that are really difficult in moderating is that you allow people only so many minutes to speak. And you all have so much to say. These women are all older that me: I couldn't very well tell them, "You have to be quiet, now." So I want to thank them, and I would like to ask grandmother here to say the closing prayer.